

ECP issues notice to Nawaz

LAHORE (INP): The Election Commission has stirred controversy by issuing a notice to former PM Nawaz Sharif following a request from PTI-backed independent candidate Yasmin Rashid in NA-130. The Election Commission's directive comes amidst allegations of electoral misconduct, with Yasmin Rashid's lawyer and PTI leader, Advocate Ahmed Owais, decrying what he calls "the worst rigged polls in the history of Pakistan."



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ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar witnessing signing ceremony between Pakistan Mineral Development Corporation and Miracle Saltworks Collective Inc. (USA) for joint venture agreement for the value addition and export of pink salt.

Utilisation of resources will lead to a stable Pakistan: PM

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Tuesday reassuring the government's all-out support to the investors, said the effective utilisation of human as well as mineral resources would lead to a stable, prosperous and rising Pakistan.

"Our human resource is more important than our mineral resource. The human resource coupled with the mineral resource will lead to stable, prosperous and rising Pakistan," he said addressing the signing ceremony of a joint venture agreement between Pakistan Mineral Development Corporation (PMDC) and the US-based Miracle Saltworks Collective Inc for establishing a dedicated facility for crushing and packaging of pink salt for the export purposes.

Managing Director of the PMDC Asad Ahmed and President of Miracle Saltworks Collective Inc Ahmed Nadeem Khan signed the agreement that was witnessed by the Prime Minister Kakar, Energy Minister Muhammad Ali and relevant senior authorities. The prime minister said the practice of exporting raw materials should come to an end as the export of the products after value addition was direly needed.

"This is the path for Pakistan. This is the right step. We will be exporting the quality product in the coming days. Pakistan will get rightful branding for its product. This will pave the way for further opportunities," the prime minister remarked who also

distributed awards among the individuals who played a key role in the joint venture agreement. Calling the US a "most valued" trading partner of Pakistan, he said the agreement symbolized the investment climate in the country that would further strengthen the friendship between the two countries and the people.

He said the decision of the US-based firm to invest \$200 million in Pakistan was a resounding vote of confidence in the government's economic policies. Prime Minister Kakar said the investment was not just about the pink salt rather it was about trust, partnership and shared prosperity.

He told the gathering that the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) was playing an important role in creating an enabling environment for foreign direct investment. It served as a one-window facility for the investors besides streamlining processes and removing the bureaucratic hurdles to attract investment in the fields mining, energy, IT, agriculture, livestock, industry and tourism, he added.

The prime minister lauded the friendship of the American people calling them the "most warm and generous" people on earth with openness and liberal values which was a role model for a thriving economy. He said Pakistan was not rich for its geostrategic location rather it was a geoeconomic offer as the country sat on the Tethyan Belt of 2800sq km filled with immense mineral resources.

Earlier, Energy Minister Muhammad Ali said the agreement was the

beginning of a long journey that would boost the investors' confidence. He said Pakistan had tremendous potential in the mineral sector and the government was committed, focused and had prioritized the sector to exploit the potential through more investment in the pink salt sector.

PMDC Chairman Shamsuddin lauded the SIFC's role which led to surge in PMDC's profit by three to four times comparing last year. He said the PMDC's geologists were actively moving around for exploration purposes and hoped that the number of mining leases would continue to grow.

Shamsuddin called for further empowerment of the SIFC, strengthening of the Geological Survey of Pakistan besides providing security to miners, and amending the rules to streamline the processes. Managing Director of PMDC Engineer Asad Ahmed said the agreement represented the culmination of excessive collaboration between the partners and thanked the petroleum ministry and SIFC for effective coordination.

Chief Communications Officer of the Miracle Saltworks Collective Inc Mubarak Khan called the agreement the beginning of a great journey and a great opportunity for Pakistan as the pink salt would act as an ambassador at millions of homes internationally. Executive VP and Chief Financial Officer Miracle Saltworks Collective Inc said the project would lead to global monetisation of Pakistan's mineral resources which was one of the richest countries with huge mineral resources.

IHC issues arrest warrants for Islamabad DC in contempt case

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Tuesday ordered the authorities to place Islamabad Deputy Commissioner (DC) Irfan Nawaz Memon's name on the no-fly list for skipping proceedings of a contempt case over the detention of PTI leader Shehryar Afridi's detention under the Maintenance of Public Order (MPO) ordinance.

The ordinance provides the government with vast powers of detention and has been used by authorities to round up and detain PTI leaders following the May 9 riots.

Justice Babar Sattar was hearing the case against Islamabad DC and Islamabad Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Operations Malik Jamil Zafar for exceeding their authority by issuing orders under Section 3 of the MPO. During the hearing, SSP

Operations Zafar and Superintendent of Police (SP) Farooq Buttari appeared upon being summoned by the court. At the same time, the lawyer representing Islamabad DC submitted a plea for Memon's exemption from the court.

"My client is currently in Khairpur as he has to go to perform Umrah," the lawyer informed the court. At this, Justice Sattar remarked that the court hadn't accepted the plea for exemption. "Let the Ministry of Interior and DG Passports also ensure that the name of Irfan Nawaz Memon is placed on the Exit Control List (ECL) so that he is unable to leave the territorial jurisdiction of Pakistan," a short order released by the court stated. It also directed the inspector generals of police (IGPs) of all four provinces and the federal capital to "arrest" Islamabad DC and present him before the court today

(Wednesday) at 9am. Afridi was detained by the police in connection with the May 9 violence, under 3MPO on May 16, 2023. He was released on May 30, 2023, but only to be arrested again outside the prison.

However, the PTI leader acquired bail from the Lahore High Court on July 31, 2023, but was retaken into custody a few days later by the Rawalpindi police soon after his release from Adiala jail. He then approached the IHC via his lawyer seeking his release and for the MPO order to be set aside.

It may be noted that the court has indicted Memon and three others including, SSP Zafar, SP Buttari, and an SHO, in the case. At an earlier hearing, the high court ruled that the federal capital's deputy commissioner, who also acts as the district magistrate, does not have the authority to issue detention orders under 3MPO.

Bhutto reference as opportunity for judiciary, army to restore reputation

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa has wondered whether the Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto reference is an opportunity for the Supreme Court and armed forces to rectify their past mistakes and restore their reputation.

"Isn't this an opportunity for both institutions to get rid of the accusations hurled against them," the top judge remarked on Tuesday during a hearing of a presidential reference related to the death sentence awarded to the former PM Bhutto in 1979. The apex court larger bench — led by CJP Isa and comprising Justice Sardar Tariq Masood, Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Yahya Afridi, Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhel, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Syed Hasan Azhar Rizvi and Justice Musarrat Hilali — heard the presidential reference seeking to revisit the "controversial" death

sentence awarded to former PM Bhutto in 1979.

PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari and amicus curiae with expertise on the criminal and constitutional sides attended today's hearing. CJP Isa also said that imposing martial law is a decision of an individual and not of an institution of the army. "Isn't the verdict in the Bhutto reference draw a line for the judiciary and the army," he added.

The Supreme Court also decided to hear the heirs of the late PPP founder and complainant Ahmad Raza Kasuri in the presidential reference. CJP Isa directed all respondents to keep their arguments short and said that the top court wanted to conclude the hearing of the case before the retirement of a judge part of the larger bench.

Amicus Curiae Makhdoom Ali Khan told the bench that the inter-views of former judges Naseem

Hassan Shah, Dorab Patel, and Aslam Riaz were on record to prove the biases of the judges who awarded capital punishment to the PPP founder. He said former judge Qaiser Rashid Khan had said that "even a cat cannot be awarded death penalty based on the evidence" present in the ZA Bhutto case.

Khan also said that the court can announce the verdict in the ZA Bhutto case under Article 187. During the hearing, Justice Shah remarked that the court could not examine the merit of the case since the verdict had already been announced. However, the court can look into how the former PM was sentenced to death. "If the court has to ascertain whether the judges announced the verdict under duress then what would be the evidence [to back the claim]," he remarked. The hearing of the case has been adjourned till February 26.

Massive hike in electricity tariff likely

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) is expected to increase the electricity prices in Pakistan on account of fuel cost adjustment, says in media reports.

The Central Power Purchasing Agency (CPPA) has filed a plea with NEPRA seeking an increase of Rs7.13 per unit in the electricity prices from next month. If the demand is approved by NEPRA, the increase would put an additional burden of Rs66.77 billion on inflation-bitten consumers. CPPA in its petition said 7.93 billion units were distributed to power distribution companies in January 2024. Nepra will take up the petition on Feb 23. The revised prices will not be applicable to lifeline KE consumers.

It is pertinent to mention here that on January 31, the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) increased the electricity tariff by Rs5.63 per unit on account of monthly fuel adjustment (MFA). The decision was announced after the NEPRA completed a hearing on the Central Power Purchasing Agency (CPPA) petition seeking a hike in electricity tariff by Rs5.63 per unit under fuel monthly adjustment for December 2023.

PTI demands resignation of CEC

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has demanded "immediate resignation" of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja for "failing" to hold general elections 2024 in a free, fair and transparent manner.

"Incumbent CEC [Sikandar Sultan Raja] has now become a controversial personality as he failed to stop rigging in elections; PTI demands CEC Raja to resign immediately," Barrister Gohar Ali Khan told journalists after meeting party's founder Imran Khan in Rawalpindi's Adiala jail. He further said that all the inquiries into election discrepancies should be impartial and without any interference. "We want the election results to be in accordance with the mandate of the public," Gohar added.

He also demanded that the polling authorities issue election results in line with Form 45 after several political parties alleged discrepancies in the results based on Form 47. Gohar Ali Khan pointed out that former Rawalpindi Commissioner's revelations affirmed the PTI's stance regarding rigging in the elections, saying that "non-transparent" elections could also hamper International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme with Pakistan.

"The Election Commission has failed to fulfill its responsibility", he regretted, also demanding an investigation into Liaquat Ali Chatha's allegations and conduct of Feb 8 elections. "CEC Raja should resign so that the inquiry into Feb 8 irregularities can be called non-controversial", he added.

SIC approaches ECP

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: After inclusion of PTI-backed Independents, the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) has approached the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for allocation of reserved seats.

An application has been submitted in the ECP for this purpose by the SIC. The SIC has taken the stance that at least 50 PTI-backed Independents had joined the SIC. These Independents should now be considered as SIC lawmakers.

PPP, PML-N to form govt Shehbaz PM, Zardari President

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD : Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari announced that the PPP and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) are set to forge a coalition government, with PML-N's Shehbaz Sharif slated to reassume the role of Prime Minister of Pakistan.

Addressing a press conference in Islamabad following discussions with a delegation from the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) regarding the formation of the government at the federal level, the PPP chairman said that candidates backed by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) fell short of securing a simple majority to govern at the federal level.

"In light of our combined strength, both PPP and PML-N now possess the necessary numbers to establish the government," stated Bilawal.

Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari said the PPP is grateful to PMLN for supporting the PPP candidate co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari for the slot of President of Pakistan.

Speaking at the press conference, PMLN president Shehbaz Sharif said the PMLN will support Asif Ali Zardari to become the president of Pakistan.

He said the PPP and PMLN are in a position to form a coalition government, adding Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP), MQMP and PMLQ are their allies.

He said the coalition government will be run with the consultation of its allies, adding the joint the government will ensure prosperity and economic stability in the country.

Shehbaz Sharif said they had asked the PTI-backed independent candidates to form the government, if they had required numbers for the formation of a new government, adding the PMLN asked them that the party was ready to sit on opposition benches, if the independents formed the government.

Addressing the joint press conference, PPP Cochairman Asif Ali Zardari said the coalition government was going to be established because none of the party had a simple majority to form the government.

The PPP leader said the joint government will make efforts to come up with expectations of the people of Pakistan.

US vetoes truce as north Gaza starves

NEW YORK: In remarks to the UN Security Council after the US vetoed an Algerian resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, US Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield said that calling for an immediate ceasefire could stymie diplomatic efforts in progress to reach an agreement between Hamas and Israel for a pause in the fighting.

The US has consistently shielded Israel from diplomatic pressure at the UN since the war began, vetoing resolutions calling for a ceasefire on three occasions despite overwhelming support from UN member states. The US is also Israel's primary supplier of arms. "Colleagues, over the past few weeks, we have made incredibly clear that the resolution before the council would not achieve the goal of a sustainable peace, and may in fact run counter to it," Thomas-Greenfield said.

"Proceeding with a vote today was wishful and irresponsible. And so while we cannot support a resolution that would put sensitive negotiations in jeopardy, we look forward to engaging on a text we believe will address so many of the concerns we all share. A text that can, and should, be adopted by the council." The tally was 13 votes in favour as the UK abstained and the US voted against the measure.

This marks the third time the US has vetoed Gaza ceasefire proposals at the Security Council since the start of the war. The UN Security Council is now meeting to vote on a resolution brought by Algeria that calls for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. The US ambassador the UN, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, has already telegraphed her intention to veto this resolution.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari talking to media persons at Supreme Court.

Bilawal to support PML-N on his own terms, conditions

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari attended the hearing of the presidential reference on Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's murder. Talking to the media in the premises of the Supreme Court, Chairman PPP said that he hopes that the justice which the daughter of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto could not get will be provided to his grandson.

Chairman PPP said that Pakistan was ruled by dictatorship for about half of its existence and Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto was martyred during a dictatorship. Now, the progress of the judiciary and parliament are linked to this issue. We hope that the founder of the Constitution who laid the foundation of the buildings of the Supreme Court and the Parliament, will get justice. He was judicially murdered. For a murder, there is no time limitation for the case to be taken up.

Honourable judges will decide through this reference whether justice was meted out in this case during a dictatorship and the resultant remedy. The judi-

ciary will be able to wash out the blot on it. The Chief Justice has said today that the blot on the other institutions will also be washed through this opportunity. We can draw a line on the sand that whatever happened in the past was wrong so that we can look towards the future so such heinous crimes are not repeated. Chairman Bilawal said that Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir had a dream to get justice for her father and we are thankful to President Zardari for sending this reference which provided us an opportunity to get justice. He said that he was impressed by the intellectual calibre of the judges. They are looking at the case with not only the regard to law but also history and the facts and figures are on their fingertips. It gives me pleasure to see that the first woman judge of the Supreme Court is also in the bench hearing this case, Chairman Bilawal expressed. History goes forward in a beautiful manner.

Responding to the questions by the journalists, Chairman Bilawal said that one remedy is the judicial reference and other avenues are also available. If there is

no time limitation for those aggrieved by a murder to file a case, then an FIR against the conspirators too can be filed. "What can stop the judiciary from pursuing Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's case then?". Chairman Bilawal expressed. This avenue too is being contemplated. We hope that by this judicial reference we can correct our history as we want to see our institutions blotless. Hence, the legal process could also be explored through a FIR. Responding to another question, Chairman PPP said that he is not impatient regarding the hearing of this case. Journalists should present evidence before levelling any allegation against me, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said.

Bilawal said that the people are so aware that they did not give a mandate to any single party which gives the message that they do not wish for a single party to face the challenges alone. The people are saying that the parties should get together, and this is known as 'compromise' in politics. There is give and take in political coalitions.

Terrorist gunned down

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: A terrorist, who had been involved in taking the lives of innocent civilians, was gunned down in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's (KP) Dera Ismail Khan district, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said Tuesday. According to the military's media wing, security forces conducted an intelligence-based operation in the DI Khan district on Tuesday.

Four injured in roof collapse incident

LAHORE (APP): At least four people, including a minor girl, were injured when roof of a house collapsed in Hanjarwal, on Multan Road, here on Tuesday.

The victims were inside the room of the house when its roof caved in. As a result, four people were trapped under the debris.

On receiving information, Rescue teams reached the spot, removed the debris and evacuated the victims. The injured were shifted to a nearby hospital for treatment. Two of the victims were said to be in a critical condition.

SFA collects samples from Bhains colony

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Food Authority (SFA), team led by Director General Agha Fakhar Hussain, on Tuesday, visited Bhains colony of Karachi and inspected cattle yards to review the hygienic condition of the milk being supplied in the area. The SFA team collected over 100 samples of milk from different dairy farms and cattle yards of Bhains colony and later, the samples were sent to food testing laboratory of Karachi University for analysis, said a statement issued here.

Office bearers of the Dairy and Cattle Farms Association were also accompanied by Sindh Food Authority team during the visit.

The SFA issued notices to owners of various cattle yards and they were also warned of action as per the SFA Act on failure to improve hygiene and sanitation conditions at their dairy farms and cattle yards. Agha Fakhar Hussain, speaking on the occasion said that SFA was working vigorously to ensure the supply of chemical-free pure milk to citizens across the province. He warned strict action against the vendors found involved in selling sub-standard milk.

CM inaugurates new building of Iqbal Town's OCU

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi inaugurated the new building of the Iqbal Town's Organized Crime Unit (OCU) and reviewed various sections besides commending the quality of the rooftop cafe.

CM Naqvi also inspected model police station Ichra and praised the high standards of the upgradation. He extended congratulations to ASP and her team. The CM emphasized the importance of initiatives for the welfare of the police department and underscored the responsibility of treating citizens well at police stations. IGP apprised about the facilities provided for the citizens.

Secretary (Home), CCPO Lahore, DIG (Operations) and others were also present.

CM inaugurates sports gym of police training collegeP: Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Tuesday inaugurated the sports gymnasium of Police Training College Lahore and directed to arrange the latest exercise machines in the gym while inspecting the facilities provided for the trainee policemen.

In his address to the trainees, the CM advised them to uphold integrity and pursue lawful means of livelihood. He emphasized that those who earn through lawful means would find blessings and abundant sustenance provided by Allah Almighty. Expressing confidence, he stated

ed that trainees could earn respect and honor by choosing a lawful livelihood and urged them to work diligently for their future.

Highlighting the extensive renovation of the training college within a few months, the CM remarked on its transformation from an archaic building with inadequate facilities to a center of excellence. Upon entering the premises, he felt a palpable sense of improvement, likening it to a training center in New York or Los Angeles.

He credited IG Usman Anwar for the commendable upgrades in police stations, transforming their appearance significantly. Mohsin Naqvi remarked, "We used to boast about the transformation of every police station, but now we can proudly extend that to every police training center as well." He acknowledged IG Usman Anwar and his team for their dedicated efforts towards safe city projects and police welfare. The IG Police echoed gratitude towards CM Naqvi for his relentless efforts in advancing police welfare. He emphasized the significant shift in Punjab police's trajectory before and after CM Mohsin Naqvi's tenure, signifying an era of remarkable progress and development. CCPO, Addl IGs, Commandant Police Training College, DIG (Operations) and others were also present.

SMIU VC addresses the Orientation Day

KARACHI (APP): The Vice Chancellor Sindh Madressatul Islam University Dr. Mujeeb Sahrai has said that students must keep their minds open and have a vision as to achieve multiple goals in their lives.

Addressing the Orientation Day organised by Directorate of Students Affairs and Counselling of SMIU for newly enrolled students in the session of Spring 2024, at the Sir Shah Nawaz Bhutto Auditorium, Dr Mujeeb Sahrai welcomed the students at the Alma-Mater of Founder of Pakistan Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah and said in our country besides other resources there is a youth energy that must be properly used for progress of the country and its people.

"There is 60 per cent of youth population in the country, therefore, their services for the country must be according to the demands of the present day age. We have to make the country developed with

the help of the young generation," the vice chancellor said and added that the newly enrolled students are fortunate that they have succeeded in getting admission at SMIU. Therefore, they pay complete attention to their study here and also participate in co-curricular activities being organised by SMIU's student societies.

The vice chancellor stressed that the students benefit from the facilities being provided by the SMIU to them. "SMIU has the most learned and experienced faculty, thus the students shall get quality education over here," Dr. Mujeeb Sahrai concluded. Earlier Deans Dr. Aftab Ahmed Shaikh and Dr. Zahid Ali Channar, Advisor on Academics Dr. Abdul Hafeez Khan, chairpersons Dr. Hina Shahzad, Dr. Mansoor Ahmed Kuhro and Dr. Riaz Ahmed Mangrio and Ms. Zonaira Jalali Manager Students Affairs briefed the students about the history, departments and facilities available at SMIU.



KARACHI: Caretaker Sindh Minister Justice (Retd) Maqbool Baqar presides over a Cabinet meeting at CM House.

First Lady advocates education, women empowerment

KARACHI (APP): First Lady, Samina Alvi on Tuesday underscored the invaluable contributions of teachers and the imperative need for their recognition in shaping the future of nation. Addressing the Teacher's Appreciation Ceremony of Behbud Girls College and Higher Secondary School, she lauded Behbud Association for their dedication to recognising and appreciating the hard work of teachers.

She emphasised the vital role, teachers play in shaping the future of their students and commended the organisation for championing the cause of women empowerment through education.

The first lady stressed the importance of teachers focusing on critical thinking, IT skills, and communication skills in children. In a society increasingly reliant on these skills, she underscored the need for character building and instilling values to foster civilised and compassionate citizens.

Expressing concern over the educational landscape, the first lady asserted, "Teachers are the backbone of our schools, working tirelessly

lessly to mould children into constructive contributors to society."

She highlighted the transformative power of education and emphasised that change in society is achievable through effective education.

She expressed sorrow over the fact that 10 million children were out of school in the country.

Diving deeper into the education discourse, the first lady drew attention to the critical role of mothers in laying the foundation for a child's education. She stated, "An educated mother is a strong pillar of a strong society," adding half of the population in Pakistan comprised women.

She lamented the high illiteracy rates in Pakistan, especially among female children, owing to a male-dominated society, stressing the need for a paradigm shift. In a poignant revelation, the first lady shed light on the challenges faced by women in remote areas, deprived of educational opportunities due to various constraints. She passionately advocated for the empowerment of women, recognising them as indispensable for a progressive society.

The ceremony concluded with the distribution of certificates and gifts to teachers and students who had displayed exceptional performance, underscoring the importance of recognising and rewarding excellence in education.

She referenced the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report, ranking Pakistan 145 out of 146 countries, underscoring the urgency for change.

The first lady concluded her address by sharing her dedication to various social issues, including breast cancer awareness, mental health, and stress management. She highlighted the scarcity of psychiatrists in Pakistan and the stigma surrounding mental health, calling for increased awareness.

Additionally, she expressed her commitment to facilitating differently-abled citizens and empowering women and girls in Pakistan. In closing remarks, the first lady expressed gratitude to the media persons for their pivotal role in creating awareness on these crucial issues and educating the masses.

The ceremony concluded with the distribution of certificates and gifts to teachers and students who had displayed exceptional performance, underscoring the importance of recognising and rewarding excellence in education.

Electricity supply to be suspended in LESCO region

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) has issued power supply suspension schedule for next three days i.e. February 20 to 23, 2024 as the company has to embark upon necessary maintenance and repair work on transmission lines.

According to the company's spokesman here Tuesday, the electricity supply would remain suspended from 8 am to 4 pm on February 21 from Sharqpur (SKP1-), Sheikhupura (SKP3-) and Mangtanwala Grids' feeders of Head Lalian, Mandianwala, Mian Sher Muhammad, Fatuwala, Ahmadwala, Jalalpur, Shajawal, Kot Mehmoond, Sharqpur Sharif, Faizabad, Sharqpur (SQP2), Helmor PH (E6Q1), C3 (Jharay Kalan), Mor Khunda, D4, E6 (Mandi Faizabad), G8 (Aswan Tentage), F7 (Head Ballocki), A1 (Chachke Gul) and Joge Kot.

On February 22, he said, the electricity would be suspended from 9am to 2pm from Ali Judge Grid's feeders of Machhora and Rajab; Allama Iqbal Town Grid's feeder Wahdat Colony; Askari 10 Grid's areas of F1 to F4, F6 to F9, CMH1 & 2; Ayesha Grid's areas Royal Leather, Khan Colony, Housing Colony, Rahmat Colony, DHQ Hospital, Mujahid Nagar, Miraj Park, ASM (Ayesha Spinning), Sargodha road, Ghazni Road, Habib Colony, Qasimpura, National Floor Mill and Tariq Float Glass; Basirpur Grid's feeders of Ghous-e-Azam, Bank Road, Hafiz Lal, Bataak, Ghalan, Kot Sher Khan, Rukanpora, Mehrke, Ruhlita Road and Thokar, Chaurasta; Batapur Grid's feeders of Manawan and Taqipura; Bhati Gate Grid's areas of Ravi Colony, Ali Hajveri and Ahmed Lal Road; Bachiki Grid areas F6 (Barkhordar) and F8 (Bachiki); Band Road Grid areas of PECO Road and Rana Town; Canal Hydropower Plant Grid area of EHLK, Central Park Grid's Panduki feeder; Chah Meeran Grid's feeders of Madho Lal Hussain, Fazalpur, Sulaiman Park, Akram Park, Amardeen

Road and Misri Shah; Chochak Grid feeder of Condobord; Chohang Grid areas ICC, Defense Road, Radio Pakistan, Mohlan Shah (Industrial-1), US Apprel, Bata, Rangalpur, Zirom, New Chohang, Gope Rai (Lahore Road), Industrial-2, Eden Superior, Kot Gujran, Razaq International, Sadha and Kot Sheikh; Daroghawala Grid's feeder of Akbari Colony; Depalpur Grid areas Chohan Shaman, Mol Musa, Pipli Pahar and Peer Di Hatti; DHA Rahbar Grid areas of Industrial, DHA 1-(5-6) and Pacewood; Allahabad Grid's feeder of Allahabad, X-Air Avenue Grid's area of New Jahman; Feroqabad Grid's Jahman feeder; Feroqabad Grid feeders of Pulwa, Rasool Park and C6; Fatehgarh Grid feeders of Ifthikhar Park, Amir Town, Bilal Park and Gulshan Farooq; Fort Grid's feeders Bazar Hakimian and Shisha Moti; Garden Town Grid's areas of Model Town 2 and Munir Shaheed; Ghazi Grid's feeders Pepsi Road, Ghaziabad and Zazar Shaheed Road; Gulshan Ravi Grid's feeders of Firdous Colony, Domestic, LDA, Rustam Park, Haveli Faridpur Jagir, Chak Bawa, Vasaway Vala and Jahangirabad; Hujra Grid's feeder of Ajajia Bhatta; ICI Public Grid feeders Al-Mezan, ATM, Toyo Nasak, Royal, Subhan, Samira, Laminate and Shahzad Textile; Jandiala Sher Khan Grid's area of Warren; Johar Town Grid's feeders of H Block, Q Block, R Block SFD, D Feeder, Campus View, E1, F Block, G1 and M, Niaz Baig, Badar Colony, Katar Band Road, Forensic Science, PIA Shadiwal, Bir, Walk and Shop, CAMB, Canal Park, SPARCO, Tech Society and WASA Disposal; Jubilee Town Grid's A&B and F&D Blocks, Dawood Residency, Defense Road, Indus Hospital, Mannu Textiles, Mohlanwal Scheme, Shakkam Textiles, Shams Bin Ikram, Spring Apartments and US Apparel New; Kala Shah Kaku Grid's feeders Scarp 4 and Zafar Park; KK Dogran Grid's area of Salar; Kahnah Grid's feed-

ers of US Apparel, Ferozpur Road Kahnah, Ghousia Park, Nishat, Theater, Kanganpur and Muhammadiyah; Kasur New Grid feeders of Jabomali, Shekham, Ferozpur Road, Hospital, Jinnah Road, Peruwala, Qadri, Chant, Sulej and Majeed City; Kasur Old Grid feeders of Athilpur, Ganda Singhwala, Rasoolpura, Ayaz Textile Mill (ATM), Bachiki and Dolewala; Khadian Grid's areas of Mandi Usmannwala and Tataru Kamal; Kot Radhakshan Grid's feeders City-1 and Changamanga City; KSK Grid's feeders DTM, New Industrial, Sparco No. 4,

Zafar Park, SF5 and SF6; Lahore Cantt Grid's feeder of Abid Majeed Road; LEFO Grid feeder of Ismail Nagar, Lilliyani Grid feeders Lakhniki, Premium Aluminium, Saeed Furnace and SCARP; MA Abad Grid's feeder Haji Chand; Malikpur Grid feeder of Jogekot; Mangamandi Grid feeders of Nano Dogar (Industrial-1), Manga Hitthar, Aligarh, Industrial-2, Nathe Khalsa, Lahore Poly, Sardarpur, Wapda Town, Yusuf Chakwal, Kot Asadullah, Umar Jabran, Honda, Rai Urooj, TUP, Regal Auto Waqas Rafiq, Moscow.

KARACHI (APP): Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab on Tuesday said that lighting, cleanliness and other arrangements will be made inside the boundaries and routes of the cemeteries to facilitate the citizens going to the graveyard for Fateha khawani on the occasion of Shab-e-Barat.


A facilitation centre will be established at all the graveyards with deployment of city wardens, 1122 ambulance a fire tender and tanker of drinking water and a team of city wardens will be deployed for the movement and parking of vehicles outside the cemeteries, he said this while addressing a meeting held in his office on Tuesday regarding the arrangements for Shab-e-Barat.

M u n i c i p a l Commissioner S.M.Afzal Zaidi, Director General Technical Services, Director General Parks, Senior Coordination, Municipal Director, Director City Warden, Chief Fire Officer, Chief Engineer Electrical and other officers were also present on the occasion.

Barrister Murtaza Wahab said that a large

Director number of citizens come to the graves of their relatives and friends to offer Fateha on Shab-e-Barat, so keeping in view the past experiences, all arrangements should be made including cleaning of the roads around the cemeteries, lighting and water supply.

Director number of citizens come to the graves of their relatives and friends to offer Fateha on Shab-e-Barat, so keeping in view the past experiences, all arrangements should be made including cleaning of the roads around the cemeteries, lighting and water supply.



GOVERNMENT OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA
PAKHTUNKHWA HIGHWAYS AUTHORITY, PESHAWAR
Tel: No. 091-9210963, Fax No, 091-9210434, Email: info@pkha.gov.pk
Attached Departments Complex near Treasury office, Khyber Road Peshawar

NOTICE INVITING E-BIDDING
(Single Stage single Envelope E-Bidding System)
Pakhtunkhwa Highways Authority (PKHA) invites Electronic Bids from eligible firms / contractors in accordance with KPPRA Procurement Rules 2014 on, "Single Stage Single Envelope" E-Bidding Procedure for the following work. The bidders should be registered with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority (KPPRA) & Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) for the Year 2023-24 in relevant Category & Field of Specialization. The firms already enlisted with PKHA having adequate financial soundness, relevant experience, personnel capabilities. Required equipment and other requirements as included in ITB can participate in the tender.

S. No	Name of work	Estimated Cost in Million	Required Category of PEC/PKHA	Bid Security (RS.)	Tender Entry Fees (Rs.)	Period of Completion	Last date & time of Submission	Date & Time of Opening
1	Package No.11 / 2023-4/II: Restoration of Damaged Road Portions/ Retaining Walls & Heavy Slips / Debris Removal i/c Heavy Boulders Blasting on Mansehra-Oghi- Darband-Chapper Section of P-HWay (S-12)	57.510	C-5/PH-7	2% of Estimate d Cost	17,253	12 Months	11-03-2024 At 12:00 hrs	11-03-2024 At 12:30 hrs
2	Package No. / 2023/24 / II: Construction of Slab Culvert at km07 on Provincial Highway Chakdra-Shamozai-Kabal-Kanju-Matta-Bagh Dheri Road	2.428	C-6/ PH-8	-do-	730	06 Months	11-03-2024 At 12:00 hrs	11-03-2024 At 12:30 hrs

1. B.O.Q/Engineer Estimate, instruction to bidders (ITB), TOR's etc. can be downloaded from (www.pkha.gov.pk) & KPPRA website (www.kppra.gov.pk) for bidding purpose. These documents can also be obtained from the office of the Deputy Director (procurement) PKHA Peshawar before opening date and submit it along with bid. Otherwise bids submitted without these documents will be considered as non-responsive.

DIRECTOR-II
PKHA Peshawar.

INF(P)312/24

PUBLIC NOTICE Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Di Hayat with regards to movable & immovable assets of deceased Mr. Murtaz citizen number 1560203856881 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs. 1.Zakia Bibi (Daughter)2.Uzma (Daughter)3.Nasib Rana (Spouse)4.Muhammad Alam (Son)5.Dil Hayat (Son) On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice. INCHARGE SFU, NADRA SWAT-SFU	PUBLIC NOTICE Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Farrukh Zaman with regards to movable & immovable assets of deceased Ms. Hamida Bibi citizen number 162029098454 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs. 1.Azeta Shams (Daughter)2.Ghazala Shams (Daughter)3.Aqila Shams (Daughter)4.Shahid Zaman (Son)5.Farrukh Zaman (Son) On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice. INCHARGE SFU, NADRA SWABI-SFU	PUBLIC NOTICE Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Ms. Shahbaz Naz with regards to movable & immovable assets of deceased Ms. Musarrath citizen number 156029844186 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs. 1.Taimoor Muhammad (Brother)2.Muhammad Qaddafi (Brother)3.Shabnam Naz (Sister)4.Kausar Sohail (Sister) On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice. INCHARGE SFU, NADRA SWAT-SFU	PUBLIC NOTICE Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Ms. Nasim Sabri with regards to movable & immovable assets of deceased Ms. Azizah Sabri citizen number 173010652352 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs. 1.Nasim Sabri (Daughter)2.Saada Shaikat (Daughter)3.Farida Anwar (Daughter)4.Sharmin Riaz (Daughter)5.Muhammad Waseem Sabri (Son)6.Muhammad Nadeem Sabri (Son) On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice. INCHARGE SFU, NADRA RING ROAD-DSFU
PUBLIC NOTICE Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Sharif Rabbani with regards to movable & immovable assets of deceased Mr. Ghulam Jeeelan citizen number 1350306136145 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs. 1.Kousar Bibi (Daughter)2.Waheda Begum (Daughter)3.Faiza Bibi (Daughter)4.Saima Bibi (Daughter)5.Zareena Bibi (Spouse)6.Muhammad Luqman (Son)7.Muhammad Azam (Son)8.Shahzad Ahmed (Son)9.Sajjad Ahmed (Son)10.Muhammad Asif (Son) On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice. INCHARGE SFU, NADRA MANSEHRA-SFU	PUBLIC NOTICE Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Sajjad Ahmed with regards to movable & immovable assets of deceased Mr. Ghulam Jeeelan citizen number 1350306136145 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs. 1.Musarrat Iqbal (Daughter)2.Sadia Bibi (Daughter)3.Bibi Jamshed (Spouse)4.Ajaz Ahmed (Son)5.Sheraz Rabbani (Son) On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice. INCHARGE SFU, NADRA MANSEHRA-SFU	PUBLIC NOTICE Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Amjad Abbasi with regards to movable & immovable assets of deceased Mr. Muhammad Younas citizen number 1350306486959 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs. 1.Shama Abbasi (Daughter)2.Gulnaz Abbasi (Daughter)3.Muhammad Anshad (Son)4.Amjad Abbasi (Son)5.Assad Ali Abbasi (Son) On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice. INCHARGE SFU, NADRA MANSEHRA-SFU	PUBLIC NOTICE Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Naik Nawaz with regards to movable & immovable assets of deceased Mr. Khan Gul citizen number 4240169783751 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs. 1.Shereen Khela (Daughter)2.Shagrina (Daughter)3.Zubaida Bibi (Daughter)4.Salma Bibi (Spouse)5.Zahid Gul (Son)6.Naik Nawaz (Son)7.Raza Gul (Son) On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice. INCHARGE SFU, NADRA RING ROAD-DSFU
PUBLIC NOTICE Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Nisar Ahmed with regards to movable & immovable assets of deceased Mr. Hader Zaman citizen number 1330204629311 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs. 1.Nazma Bibi (Daughter)2.Sajida Bibi (Daughter)3.Musarrat Bibi (Daughter)4.Zarina Jan (Spouse)5.Muhammad Ahmed (Son)6.Qari Mazhar Abbas Saeedi (Son)7.Nisar Ahmed (Son)8.Muhammad Ifthikhar Hazarvi (Son) On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice. INCHARGE SFU, NADRA MARDAN-SFU	PUBLIC NOTICE Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Sardar Ali with regards to movable & immovable assets of deceased Ms. Gul Basha citizen number 1510196296844 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs. 1.Sarfa (Daughter)2.Sabina (Daughter)3.Sartaji Ali (Son)4.Wajid Ali (Son)5.Assad Ali (Son)6.Sardar Ali (Son) On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice. INCHARGE SFU, NADRA BUNER-SFU	PUBLIC NOTICE Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Farooq with regards to movable & immovable assets of deceased Mr. Parveen Bibi citizen number 1720162635398 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs. 1.Farooq (Son) On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice. INCHARGE SFU, NADRA NOWSHERA-SFU	PUBLIC NOTICE Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Nisar Ahmed with regards to movable & immovable assets of deceased Mr. Hader Zaman citizen number 1330204629311 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs. 1.Nazma Bibi (Daughter)2.Sajida Bibi (Daughter)3.Musarrat Bibi (Daughter)4.Zarina Jan (Spouse)5.Muhammad Ahmed (Son)6.Qari Mazhar Abbas Saeedi (Son)7.Nisar Ahmed (Son)8.Muhammad Ifthikhar Hazarvi (Son) On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice. INCHARGE SFU, NADRA HARIPUR-SFU

PID/195/25

Governor stresses students to play role for country

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali stressed youngsters to divert their attention towards habit of books reading in existing era of social media and said the habit would change mindset and lives of young generation.

He was addressing the inauguration ceremony of Grand Book Fair in Khyber Medical College as a Chief Guest. The event was also attended by Dean KMC,

Dr. Mehmood Aurangzeb, Chairman Board of Governor, Dr. Umar Ayub, Dr. Fakr-e-Alam, faculty members and students.

The governor who inaugurated the book fair said that significance of book reading could not be undermined in existing age of social media and internet adding that students should spare time for book reading keeping in view its importance for their personal grooming. He said that books can change mindset

of youngsters besides nurturing their vision and improve capabilities.

He appreciated efforts of organizers to hold the event and said that book reading would keep abreast students of day to day development happening in this age of transformation and technology.

KP Governor said that books would give new vision to thinking and change perception of youngsters and enable them to meet the challenges of

world that is changing owing to introduction of new technologies.

He said that government is spending huge amount to provide education facilities to students and it is duty of youngsters to avail these opportunities and play role in development and progress of the country.

Bangash laments lack of response from RO

PESHAWAR (INP): PTI's Kamran Bangash has said he still has not received a response from the Returning Officer after requesting attested copies of the Form 45.

"I has been seven days since I submitted my application to the Returning Officer PK-82, Awais Khan, requesting attested copies of Form45s immediately after he announced the manipulated consolidated results (Form 47) in absence of all the candidates and our agents," he wrote in a post on X.

According to Bangash, his election agent has been visiting the RO's office daily for the past seven days to no avail.

"This situation exemplifies the disregard for the public's mandate by a BPS-17 official Awais Khan and his DC Afaaq Wazir, who prioritise personal gains (corruption) over their duty and public vote."

"It is clear that he was engaged in manipulating the Form 45 to favour a candidate who ranked seventh in the voting, yet a group of unscrupulous individuals declared him the winner," he said.

Oath taking ceremony of EUTA held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The oath taking ceremony of Engineering University Teachers Association (EUTA) was held here Tuesday.

The Vice chancellor, Prof. Dr. Qaisar Ali administered oath from Amir Taj (Department of Computer Science & IT) as President, Prof. Dr. Zahid Wadood Mufti as Vice President, Dr. Atif Sardar as General Secretary, Dr. Ehtiram-ul-Haq as Joint Secretary and Engr. Adnan Rasheed as Joint Secretary. The executive body also took oath on the occasion.

The vice chancellor said he was ready to accept any task which would help the cause of higher education in the university and appreciated the role of teachers for standing by University administration in all times.

Amir Taj, President EUTA, expressed full confidence in the leadership of vice chancellor and said that EUTA having no political affiliation would only work for the welfare of teaching community and betterment of the University.

The Deans, Registrar, Heads of Departments, senior faculty members and administrative officers attended the ceremony.

Candidates asked to submit polls expenses

PESHAWAR (INP): All the candidates for reserved seats of female and minority in both national and provincial assemblies have been asked to submit their election expenses with concerned Returning Officer by February 21.

In a press statement issued on Tuesday, Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has reminded all the candidates of reserved seats for women and minority whose Names are included in Form 33 to submit their election expenses.

The last date for submission of election expense is February 21 and candidates are asked to submit Form C with concerned Returning Officer before expiry of last date.

In case of non-compliance of election code of conduct, the notification regarding winner of the seats will not be issued, Election Commission of Pakistan warns.



PESHAWAR: Director General Information Department KP Muhammad Imran and DG PID Ashfaq Ahmad Khalil discussing important issues in their meeting.

PHC partially accepts quash plea against 4 FIRs

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice SM Attique Shah partially accepted quash plea of former provincial minister Kamran Bangash against four First Information Reports (FIRs) on similar grounds, on Tuesday.

PHC ordered quashing of FIRs registered at Chitral and Lower Kohistan district while sustained FIR in Tank. The counsel Ali

Zaman advocate argued that the petitioner is Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) activist and served Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as provincial minister.

PTI's activist Kamran Bangash booked in four FIRs registered at different police stations in similar sections of law for agitating party's workers for vandalism on 9th May, the lawyer said. He added that Kamran Bangash is indicted in FIRs registered at Bannu, Chitral, DI Khan and Kohistan districts.

Former provincial minister has discharged from FIR registered at DI Khan, the lawyer argued. Although, Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim observed that separate FIRs can't be registered on similar charges.

PHC's divisional discharged Kamran Bangash from FIRs registered at Chitral and Kohistan while sustained FIR in Tank district.

Former provincial minister claimed that he had obtained relief in all cases and added that he is concluded in different cases on similar charges regarding

promoting agitation against the state. He added that Returning Officer didn't providing Form45 despite a plea for provision. It is worthy to mention that the polling agent obtains Form45 after counting of votes at particular polling station.

Independent MPAs submit affidavit of joining SIC

PESHAWAR (APP): The PTI supported independent candidates in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assembly have started submitting affidavits to Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) regarding joining of Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) political party.

The members have submitted the undertaking of joining SIC under the Rule 92 (6) of the Election Rules, 2017, said a copy of the affidavit available with this agency.

It is pertinent to mention here that the ECP had asked all the notified returned candidates of the provincial assembly to declare their joining of any political party within three-day of their notification of returned candidates.



PESHAWAR: PPP's Secretary Information Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Amjad Khan Afridi addressing a press conference. — F.P. photo by Gulam Murtaza

Expert hopes rise in Pakistan fish export after recent amendments

PESHAWAR (APP): Omar Hayat Khan, an expert on fisheries and environment, has said that the recent amendments in Pakistan Fish Inspection Rules, 1998 will facilitate the export of fish and fisheries related products to international market, including existing and new buyers.

Talking to APP, he said that all the federating units have been taken on board for the implementation of the amendments aimed at better monitoring of the quality of fish and fisheries products for biosecurity at every stage of value chain, beginning from stage to processing of fish and its products for its quality for human consumption.

This new development of the government is in the right direction to meet the regulatory requirements of importing countries throughout the world where fish and fish products are consumed.

The step will also provide support to the existing exporters and fisheries processing industry in exporting fish and fisheries products to Europe and Gulf as well as south Asian countries.

Mr Khan, who had an experience of 40 years in fisheries said that Pakistan fisheries sector which is contributing to one percent of GDP will improve its

share of GDP in coming years ahead if the government remain focused on supporting the Marine and Inland fisheries and Aquaculture sub sector of Agriculture.

He said that new employment opportunities will emerge at various levels of Aquaculture Value Chain from production to processing units as well as allied industries while improvement in quality will provide support in increase in demand of fish and fisheries products at both domestic and international level.

He added that marine sector is picking up where success have been achieved in rearing marine shrimp in coastal belt of Pakistan. He called for provision of enabling environment to investors through provision of relevant information of location for establishment of production facilities and allied industry of feed to ensure the availability of the fish feed ingredients at local level in the country.

The step, he said will also support use of local secondary byproducts of other industry in quality fish production thus improving the demand of byproducts of other industries. He said that Fisheries Development Board, INFAL has started working of National Aquatic

Organism Health Strategy and National Small-Scale Fisheries and Aquaculture Development Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2030.

A consultative workshop of experts, in this regard, was held at National Research Council, Islamabad and feedback has been sought for further improvement. Soon after finalization, these documents will be placed for approval before the Federal and provincial governments.

The other highly important initiative of the Government of Pakistan is the development of a Pakistan National Residue Control Plan for Aquaculture Products, 2024, which will provide basis for residual monitoring of injurious contamination in Aquaculture products.

He said that after the implementation of the mechanism of monitoring and control mechanism for fish and fisheries products will turn our fish and fisheries products of Marine and Inland fisheries and Aquaculture eligible for import by other purchasing countries and the volume of our exports will be on growth trajectory.

He said that the commitment of the new government for the implementation of the amended rules

will be very crucial for the sub sector of Fisheries and Aquaculture development. Attracting foreign direct investment is the main focus for increasing export of fish and fisheries to increase foreign exchange income for the exchequer.

These initiatives by the government will support conducive environment for investment of the local investors and foreign direct investment to translate them into creation of employment opportunities for the local youth work force and increase in the income of the small fish farmers to improve their livelihood.

Substandard juice seizes, imposes fines

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety and Halal Food Authority on Tuesday conducted a targeted inspection against adulteration in Peshawar, resulting in the seizure of a significant quantity of hazardous cold drinks.

The pokesperson for the Authority provided details of the operation, stating that the food safety team in Peshawar recently conducted a raid at the Motorway Toll Plaza, inspecting vehicles transporting food and beverage items into Peshawar city.

During the inspection, Food safety team confiscated over 1200 liters of substandard juice from one vehicle. The owner of the vehicle was heavily fined, and further legal action will be taken in accordance with the Food Safety Act.

Director General of the Food Safety Authority, Shafiqullah Khan, praised the success of the operation and urged all teams to escalate their efforts in combating the adulteration mafia across the province. He stressed a zero-tolerance policy towards compromising health standards and promised stringent punitive measures against those involved in such activities.



PESHAWAR: Cobblers preparing traditional shoes (Peshawari Chappal) at his workplace.



PESHAWAR: Mayor Haji Zubair Ali addressing City Council monthly meeting.

Clearance work starts on snow covered roads

PESHAWAR (APP): The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) on Tuesday said that clearance operation has been started in Chitral, Shangla, Dir and Kohistan areas to clear the blocked roads for traffic.

An official release issued here said that Ashrait to Lowari Tunnel road, Shihkoh to Madaklasht road, Ursoon, Gharam Chashma to Gobor, Chitral to Booni and Torkhow roads were blocked during heavy snowfall in the area.

Similarly, main Dir - Chitral road blocked at Lowari Tunnel besides link roads including Barawal, Usherai Dara, Kohistan, Kumrat, Goag Dara, Amluknar, Hayagay and Sheringal were blocked in Dir.

In Kohistan Zaid Ghar, Samar Nullah main KKH road was blocked due to landsliding while KKH road was also blocked at Shaitan Pari and Qawai Mor near Pattan.

It said that various road leading to Shangla Top, Yakhtangi, Kandaw - Chakesar were blocked in Shangla, adding that the joint teams of district administrations and NHA have started clearance operation and soon the roads would be cleared.

PTI withdraws case for specific seats

PESHAWAR (INP): PTI has opted to retract the case filed for specific seats following its Ittehad with the Sunni Ittehad Council. PTI's lawyer, Shah Faisal Advocate, confirmed that the party's decision aligns with the newfound Ittehad, rendering the case obsolete.

The petition, scheduled for today's hearing at the Peshawar High Court before Justices Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Atiq Shah, sought specific seats in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly.

PTI had initially approached the court in pursuit of securing these seats and integrating independent candidates into the party.

Emphasizing PTI's stance, the petition underscored the party's entitlement to specific seats, asserting that the Supreme Court holds the authority to delist parties, not the Election Commission. However, in light of the Ittehad with the Sunni

Ittehad Council, PTI has opted to withdraw the case.

The Sunni Ittehad Council, meanwhile, has also petitioned the Election Commission for specific seats, further highlighting the evolving political landscape in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

This development comes as PTI solidifies its collaboration with independent candidates and seeks to bolster its position in the aftermath of the general elections.



PESHAWAR: Youngster selling and displaying traditional sweet item donuts to attract customers at Khyber Bazaar.

Child and woman die, 3 injured as roof collapsed

PESHAWAR (APP): At least two people including a child and woman were killed and three others injured when roof of a dilapidated house collapsed due to rain in Doranpur area of the provincial metropolis, police informed on Tuesday.

According to police, three women and two children were buried under the rubble when the roof of a house collapsed in Jinnah Hospital area of Doranpur, on the outskirts of the district.

Rescue 1122 said the

bodies of a child and a woman were recovered from the rubble while the rest of the three people were retrieved in injured condition and shifted to hospital. The dead included Ibrahim (3) and a woman aged 50.

Three involved in illegal Hundi trade held

PESHAWAR (APP): FIA Commercial Banking Circle Peshawar on Tuesday arrested three suspects allegedly involved in illegal business of money exchange. According to FIA spokesman, the arrested accused were identified as Waseem Khan, Jahanzeb Khan and Zafar Iqbal, who were arrested from Kohat Road and Deen Chowk, Sadar Bazaar here.

The FIA teams recovered Rs. 770,000 and 500 Saudi riyals besides hundi reference related to foreign currency from the accused. Cases were registered against the accused and further investigation was underway.



In brief

Drug is a curse for nation F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: A daylong seminar, themed "prevention of drugs" was organized in Landi Kotal press club, district Khyber on Tuesday aimed to raise awareness about narcotics abuse and its illicit trafficking. Scores of notables and People from different walks of life were among the participants. Addressing on the occasion as guest speaker, Rana Kashif of Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), said that due to prevailing local hurdles, without support of tribesmen, they could not carry out anti-drugs activities in the district. In 2024, so far six successful anti-narcotics activities had been conducted at the border and the ANF was competent enough to tackle the drugs smuggling at the crossing. Earlier, speakers including Tehsil Chairman Haji Shah Khalid, Maulana Sher Haider, Chairman, Khyber Sports Club Mirajuddin, Dr Hidayat, Farhatullah, Saeed Shinwari and others expressed their due concern over the excessive use of drugs in the area and said because of lack of prevention policy, it put future of our youth community at stake that need to be halted. Due to the shortage of educational, sports and job facilities, people especially the youths are addicted to drugs, they added and urged that it is the duty of parents, elders and every segment of the society to play their due role to control smuggling and use of drugs.

Measles costs life of 4 minors F.P. Report

SUJAWAL: Measles outbreak has so far claimed four lives in Talib Richo coastal village located some 10 kilometers from Jati town of district Sujawal. According to reports reaching here late Monday night from the affected village the news of the epidemic broke after a team of local Journalists after some social activists apprised them about the worsening situation. The realities that emerged following that visit triggered an emergency-like situation across the district exposing the administration as well as the authorities concerned claiming to provide complete facilities to the dwellers of the remote areas of the district. The medical teams sent by District Health Officer Sujawal Dr Hanif Memon started reaching Talib Richo village after the news of the epidemic went like a wild fire across the district. The teams were busy assessing the intensity of the situation. Officials of the district health department when asked regarding the situation said that following lack of awareness the children in the remote areas of the district were not vaccinated against diseases that later proved fatal to them. They said that arrangements were under way to set up anti-measles vaccination camps in the affected as well as its nearby villages until complete eradication of the disease. Four years old Gul Muhammad, three years old Anila daughter of Qadir Richo, a two month of age baby boy Ahmed and Azizulah lost their lives to measles. A team of doctors of Taluka Hospital Jati visited the village inhabited by around 1200 people and examined the children as well as their mother. Few members of the team requesting anonymity revealed that the village with a huge human population lacked facilities of potable water and was surrounded by unhygienic conditions that had triggered the outbreak.



KOHAT: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Social Welfare, Special Education and Prisons Irshad Qaiser inaugurating Child Protection Unit at Nishtar Special Education Center.

Residents suffer due to faulty electricity cables

Anees Takar

MARDAN: Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) faulty power lines in the Zafarkhel area of Bakhshali Mardan encompassing PK-55 and NA-22 constituencies have led to daily incidents of electrical surges, causing significant damage to residents' electronic appliances. Despite continuous complaints from the public expired power lines remain unchanged.

The worn-out condition of the four power lines passing through transformers has resulted in frequent breakdowns, leading to sudden voltage spikes. As a result, household electronics such as heaters, lights, water pumps, refrigerators, and washing machines are being damaged. Residents of Bakhshali expressed frustration and stated that this ongoing issue has caused them significant financial losses over time

with no permanent solution from the authorities.

According to WAPDA officials, the unavailability of a sufficient quantity of power lines hinders their replacement in Bakhshali. If an estimate is made for the replacement of these lines, it will take at least three months to complete the process of changing power lines according to routine procedures.

A staff member of WAPDA mentioned that if any individual from the public obtains the required four line spindles from the MNA or MPA then we can proceed with the replacement. However, it is noteworthy that these power lines have never been replaced before, despite repeated incidents of high voltage surges damaging valuable belongings of the residents. Several residents have incurred substantial losses due to high voltage surges, with their valuable appliances being rendered

useless.

Ishtiaq Ahmad appealed to WAPDA and higher authorities to expedite the replacement of all faulty power lines to prevent future financial and material losses. He emphasized that if any further losses occur, the responsibility will lie solely with WAPDA and they will protest within the bounds of the law.

Mohammad Naris, a resident, highlighted the lack of action from elected representatives Atif Khan and Mujahid Khan, who are affiliated with PTI at the provincial and national levels. Despite attempts to raise the issue with them, no concrete steps have been taken for its resolution. Naris lamented the recurring incidents of high voltage surges which continue to damage their valuable belongings without any accountability or solution from the authorities.

Residents hold protest against dacoits F.P. Report

LARKANA: The continuous increase in robbery incidents in Baqrani area of Larkana district, the residents protested against the local police, Ayaz Ali took Panhor hostage and fled after looting 6 lakh rupees in cash and valuables.

In another incident on the same night, unknown armed men attacked two laborers Abdul Rahim Kandharo and Yasin Dhakan who were traveling to Badh from Larkana. But they took hostages and stole a motorcycle worth one and a half lakh rupees, a valuable mobile phone and more than thirty thousand rupees. They fled after doing so, after the increase in robbery incidents, the residents protested against the police on the road from the airport.

Speaking, Ahmed Ali Solangi, Fida Hussain, Shah Nawaz Bagheo and others protested and said that police picket Maulvi Shahkhan are sleeping in light sleep and the surrounding citizens are insecure and the citizens are protesting because of the ever-increasing unrest. During the protest, the traffic from Larkana to Badah and other cities was completely stopped. He demanded from the Deputy Inspector General of Police Larkana Division that while suspending the staff of the Police Picket Molvi branch, the looted goods by unknown suspects should be removed.

And the cash of lakhs of rupees should be returned, otherwise we will widen the scope of the protest. While on the other hand, Tehreek Nafeez Fiqh Jafariya, the Central Secretary General of Pakistan, Basharat Hussain Emami has said that Pakistan came into existence in the name of Islam and dictators in different eras killed democracy while addressing a press conference at Larkana Press Club. Emami further said that voting is the basic right of every citizen of Pakistan. PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari met the head of our party in connection with the 2024 general elections in which our party in Pakistan supported the People's Party.

He said that Pakistan is the only Islamic country possessing nuclear power and this is the reason why foreign forces are fighting for their interests in Pakistan while forces working against Pakistan's politics want to destabilize Pakistan.

Child protection unit inaugurated at special education center

Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Social Welfare, Special Education and Prisons Irshad Qaiser inaugurated the Child Protection Unit at Nishtar Special Education Center Kohat on Tuesday.

The event was arranged by the Child Protection and Welfare Commission Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in collaboration with the UNICEF. Responsibilities of the Child Protection Unit includes filing of complaints related to incidents of violence against children, making child protection plans if needed, following up on registered cases and storing information, referring children to other departments if needed, providing facilities and services and monitoring implementation of child protection measures at the district level.

Social Welfare Minister Justice (R) Irshad Qaiser

said that the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is committed to protect children and their caregivers while fulfilling its national and international obligations and all resources are being used for this important purpose.

Similarly, the provincial government is in partnership with UNICEF trying to establish child protection units at the district level in the province, the strengthening of child protection helpline 1121, the establishment of community-based child protection structures, the establishment of district child protection committees and crafting a comprehensive child protection policy and a lot of work has been done in this regard, she added.

She appreciated the efforts of UNICEF in the province regarding the child protection. Irshad Qaiser said that children are our future therefore, all out

efforts would be made for their safety, welfare and provide them better opportunities. She termed the establishment of child protection units as an important measure for the safety, welfare and rights of children and said that the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has taken the lead over the whole of Pakistan in this regard, which is very welcoming step.

Chief Protection Officer of Child Protection Commission Ijaz Ahmed, Child Protection Specialist of UNICEF Sohail Ahmed, Professor Mamoon Khattak of Kohat University and Program Manager Muhammad Waseem also addressed on the occasion and highlight the importance of child protection in detail. Later, the Minister formally inaugurated the Child Protection Unit by cutting the ribbon. She also visited different sections of the unit.

Crackdown against polythene bags directed

F.P. Report

MARDAN: The relevant officials were asked and directed to launch crack down on the use of polythene bags and its businesses in their respective districts.

It was decided in a meeting held here on Tuesday with Commissioner Mardan Division Shaukat Ali Yousafzai in the chair. He directed the Deputy Commissioners of Mardan and Swabi districts to take adequate and effective measures to tackle the issue forthwith.

On the occasion, he also directed to provide necessary facilities to transporters and passengers at Chamtar Bus Terminal and take strict action against illegal transport addas in the city for immediate transfer of all stands to the new bus terminal. He was addressing the monthly performance and revenue review meeting in his office.

Additional Commissioner Mardan Division Naem Akhtar, Deputy Commissioner Mardan Muhammad Fayaz Khan Sherpao, DC Swabi Dr. Tariqullah, Assistant to Commissioner Fazlur Rehman, Assistant and Additional Assistant Commissioners of Mardan and Swabi and other rele-

vant officials participated in the meeting. Collection of government revenue in Mardan and Swabi, visits of educational institutions, hospitals and Patwar Khans by the officers and other issues were reviewed and important decisions were taken in this regard.

Addressing the meeting, Commissioner Mardan Division Shaukat Ali Yousafzai expressed his displeasure over the lack of interest of the concerned Assistant Commissioners in the campaign against polythene bags and directed them to play their role in eradicating this scourge that destroys the environment.

Commissioner said that negligence in this regard will not be tolerated in any case. He directed the administrative officers to use all resources to establish law enforcement in their jurisdiction and provide relief to the people. He further directed the officers to conduct open katcheries on a regular basis and ensure that the problems faced by the people are solved at their doorsteps.

Traders backbone in economy: The Provincial General Secretary (GS) of Markazi Tanzeem-e-Tajirani and Mardan Chamber of commerce & industry (MCCI) President Zahir Shah said that the trader is

playing an important role in the development of the economy.

The government should give maximum subsidy on solar panels so that their price can be reduced and the trade community and especially the general masses can get more benefits of it. He expressed these views while addressing the opening ceremony of Solar Shop in Haji Gul Plaza as a special guest. Newly elected MPA Abdul Salam Afridi, Abdullah, Adnan Shinwari, Javed Shah, Abid Khan and others were present on this occasion. Zahir Shah said that the government should play its role in solving the problems faced by the businessmen and provide them with a congenial environment for business.

MCCI president said that the middleclass people should install solar systems while reducing the consumption of electricity so that the economy of the country is on the path of development. The potential change of solar energy can improve the future of Pakistan. Pakistan is our country and we will not hesitate to make any sacrifice for its stability. If the business community and the people are prosperous, then the country will be on the track of development.

DRC commits for dissemination of justice at doorsteps

F.P. Report

BUNER: Dispute Resolution Council (DRC) Pir Baba circle meeting was held under the head of Chairman Wali Rehman at Hajira of Mukhyar Khan in Pacha Kalay Pir Baba on Tuesday. The members of Tehsil Gadiezai Salarzai participated.

The members expressed that the DRC Committees have been formed by the Government under the Police Act for the purpose of hearing the complaints of the aggrieved parties in a respectful manner on the requests received for the resolution of the disputes between the people within the circle. The committee members to make sure appropriate and quick resolu-

tion of these disputes should be done by mutual consent of the parties without any expense, which will reduce the pressure on the dispute resolution, police, court and to save the valuable time and hard-earned money of the parties too besides end the bad feelings permanently and promote good relations.

In the meeting, it was decided if some of circles not to cooperate, but the committee members will continue to provide free services for the sake of Allah and the reform of the society. DRC secretary Mansoor help the chairman to share with members that during the 4 month period, 33 requests for dispute resolution were received, out of which 19 were resolved by mutual

agreement and 5 went to court on their own accord, while 8 are still pending and the paper work is being done diligently and it will be resolved soon.

On this occasion, the host Mukhtiar Khan thanked all the members for accepting the lunch and hoped that the members of the DAC Circle Pir Baba would render free services for the sake of Allah and the reformation of the society with the will remain and hope that Allah subhan wa ta'ala will surely reward them.

The meeting ended with lunch and good prayers, in which the young men of the host, especially Abbas Shaheen, did their best for the guests, for which everyone gave him special thanks.

Inflated gas bills in Dir flayed

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The gas consumers of Lower Dir district on Tuesday decided to cut their connections in protest against the inflated bills. Talking to local journalists at Timergara they said they would start to use firewood

instead of gas if the SNGPL failed to correct the bills.

They complained that Rs 40 to 50 thousand bill had been sent to every consumer in the area due to which the consumers had suffered severe anxiety and depression ad paying

the heavy bill was beyond their control. The consumers said that they will not only protest against the heavy bills of Sui Gas, but they have also decided to cut the Sui Gas connection in protest. They have started using LPG and firewood in their houses

Jawad Falak

ON 14th February, a significant milestone for the Pakistan Maritime sector was achieved as the Keel-Laying Ceremony for the second Hangor-Class Submarine were carried out. The Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf was present at this occasion as the Chief Guest. This was in continuation of the Hangor class project as construction work of the first submarine to be made at KS&EW Pakistan, had been initiated in December 2022 and the submarine is currently at an advanced stage of construction.

The Hangor class project is an outcome of a defense agreement between Pakistan and China. This agreement comprises of the development of up to eight Hangor-class Submarines of

which four submarines will be built at Wuchang Shipbuilding Industry Group (WSIG) in China and the remaining four will be constructed at KS&EW under a Transfer of Technology (ToT) agreement.

These conventional modern submarines will be equipped with the latest weapons and sensors, and the submarines are expected to have installed an AIP system onboard will significantly enhance their submerged endurance capability. AIP stands for Air-independent propulsion (AIP), or air-independent power, which is a type of marine propulsion technology that allows a non-nuclear submarine to operate without access to atmospheric oxygen by surfacing or using a snorkel. AIP in this manner enhance the durabil-

ity of diesel submarines underwater and also make them stealthier than nuclear submarines.

The eight Hangor Class submarines will significantly strengthen Pakistan Naval defense. The Pakistan Navy is likely to boost its anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) capabilities in the region especially the Exclusive Economic Zone after the project is completed. Additionally, the submarines will have the ability to carry and launch nuclear capable missiles which will bolster deterrence and improve strategic stability in the region which is currently under pressure from ramifications of Great Power competition.

However, the name of Hangor carries much significance in itself

as it carries a heritage that is famous in both regional and global naval tradition. Hangor, meaning Shark in Bengali, was a French made Daphne class submarine that served in the Pakistan Navy since 1966. In the Indo-Pak war of 1971, Hangor would find itself in the thick of fighting.

In August 1971, Hangor was deployed in November of the same year to gather intelligence outside Bombay as regional tensions arose. During this time, it observed the movement of a large Indian flotilla heading towards Karachi. Hangor, not having clearance to engage the Indian Navy as of yet could only relay this information to the homeland but this communication was intercepted by the enemy.

The Indian Navy then acting

on the information dispatched two British built Blackwood frigates, Kirpan and Khukri, to find and destroy Hangor. However, a day later, on December 4, Hangor received clearance to engage and destroy the Indian naval vessels, setting the stage for a showdown in South Asian waters.

On the night between 9 and 10 December, Hangor was making for Kathiawar Coast when it detected the two Indian frigates. Moving to intercept them, Hangor initially launched a single torpedo against the Kirpan but for some reason it did not strike the target despite being on the same path. This not only alerted Kirpan but Khukri as well, which adopted an intercept course for Hangor. Hangor's targeting team quickly reacted and

fired off a second torpedo on the approaching Khukri.

This torpedo sped and struck Khukri, resulting in an explosion as the ammunition storage area, also called a magazine of the ship, was struck. Through this feat Hangor's name became preserved in the annals of history as the first submarine after World War II to sink an enemy ship while also giving India its largest naval loss in history with deaths of 18 officers and 176 sailors.

Despite the tragic end of the 1971 war and the Indian thirst for vengeance against it, the Hangor survived and continued to serve the Navy till 2006 before retiring. Now with the start of the Hangor project, the legacy of the Hangor name as a defender of honor and maritime boundaries is expected to endure.

The author is graduate National Defence University (NDU) Islamabad in International Relations.

Hangor class: Preserving a legacy



UN warn of Israeli violations against Palestinian women, girls

UNITED NATIONS: UN experts have expressed alarm over allegations of human rights violations against Palestinian women and girls in Gaza and the occupied West Bank since Israel launched its war on Gaza on October 7.

The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) said in a statement that it had received information that Palestinian women and girls have "reportedly been arbitrarily executed in Gaza, often together with family members, including their children". The UN experts said they were "shocked by reports of the deliberate targeting and extrajudicial killing of Palestinian women and children in places where they sought refuge, or while fleeing. Some of them were reportedly holding white pieces of cloth when they were killed by the Israeli army or affiliated forces."

Israel launched an assault on Gaza after the Palestinian group Hamas led an attack on Israel on October 7, killing at least 1,139 people, according to an Al Jazeera tally based on official Israeli figures. Around 250 others were seized and taken to Gaza as hostages. Israel has responded with a devastating bombardment and ground invasion that has displaced more than 80 percent of Gaza's population and reduced much of the territory to ruins. More than 29,000 people have been killed in the Israeli assault, according to Palestinian authorities. In the occupied West Bank and east Jerusalem, Israeli forces have intensified raids since October 7, killing hundreds of Palestinians and detaining thousands of others.

The UN experts expressed alarm over the arbitrary detention of hundreds of Palestinian women and girls



including human rights defenders, journalists and humanitarian workers in Gaza and the West Bank. Many have reportedly been subjected to inhuman treatment, denied menstrual pads, food and medicine and also suffering severe beatings, the OHCHR said. On at least one occasion, Palestinian women detained in Gaza were allegedly kept in a cage in the rain and cold, without food. "We are particularly distressed by reports that Palestinian women and girls in detention have also been subjected to multiple forms of sexual assault, such as being stripped naked and searched by male Israeli army officers."

At least two female Palestinian detainees were reportedly raped while others were reportedly threatened with rape and sexual violence," the experts said. They noted that photos of female detainees in degrading circumstances were also reportedly taken by the Israeli army and uploaded online. An unknown num-

ber of Palestinian women and children, including girls, have reportedly gone missing after contact with the Israeli army in Gaza, the experts said.

"There are disturbing reports of at least one female infant forcibly transferred by the Israeli army into Israel, and of children being separated from their parents, whose whereabouts remain unknown," they said. They called for an independent, impartial and effective investigation into the allegations and for Israel to cooperate.

"Taken together, these alleged acts may constitute grave violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, and amount to serious crimes under international criminal law that could be prosecuted under the Rome Statute," the experts said. "Those responsible for these apparent crimes must be held accountable and victims and their families are entitled to full redress and justice." — Aljazeera

Canada sending more than 800 drones to Ukraine

OTTAWA (AP): The Canadian government said it will dispatch more than 800 drones to Ukraine starting as early as this spring. The Department of National Defence said in a statement that drones have become a critical capability for Ukraine in its war with Russia. It said the drones are important for surveillance and intelligence gathering, and can also be used to move supplies, including munitions.

They will cost more than \$95 million Canadian (\$70 million) and are part of a previously announced \$500 million Canadian (\$370 million) in military help for Ukraine. The SkyRanger R70 multi-mission Unmanned Aerial Systems are manufactured by Teledyne in Waterloo, Ontario. The announcement comes days ahead of the two-year anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Canada previously donated 100 high-resolution drone cameras to Ukraine, and in the past two years has pledged \$2.4 billion Canadian (\$1.8 billion) in military assistance.

15 people killed in DR Congo

DR CONGO: Armed rebels have killed 15 people in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo's troubled Ituri province, local sources said, in the second such attack in days. The sources said the CODECO (Cooperative for the Development of the Congo) militia, which claims to defend the interests of the Lendu ethnic group, again targeted people from the rival Hema tribe.

CODECO fighters ambushed users of a road near the village of Tali where they stopped 15 people, including one woman, said Jules Tsuba, a civil society leader in Djugu, a town in the area. The militiamen tied them up and undressed them before killing them while some victims "had their throats cut, others were shot dead", he said. According to a humanitarian source, "the bodies of the victims bear the marks of torture". Ruphin Mapela, the territory's administrator, confirmed the toll of 15 dead and said the attack came after months of peace. CODECO was among several Congolese armed groups that signed a peace deal last year after negotiations in Nairobi. The United Nations has said there are as many as 120 armed groups in eastern DRC. Efforts to reduce violence in the DRC have seen the deployment of thousands of South African troops as part of a Southern African Development Community (SADC) mission to fight against armed rebel groups in the east. Gold-rich Ituri suffered a conflict between ethnic-based militias from 1999 to 2003 that killed thousands before the intervention of a European force. Fighting flared again in 2017, killing thousands of civilians and triggering mass displacement. Violence has been on the rise in the conflict-hit region in recent weeks, with many blaming attacks on the M23 rebel group that has been fighting Congolese soldiers in the region for years. Kinshasa says M23, one of more than 120 armed groups in the region, is receiving military support from neighbouring Rwanda. Experts from the United Nations and the European Union have said there is evidence backing this but Rwanda denies the allegations.

But M23 has indicated in recent statements that it is amid an onslaught in eastern Congo, leading to fears the group is again targeting Goma, which it once seized 10 years ago. Tsuba said he wanted the government to "accelerate the peace process" through a programme of disarmament and reintegration of militia fighters into their communities. On Tuesday, a suspected CODECO attack left seven panners dead on mining sites in Djugu territory. — Aljazeera

Two years into Russia's war in Ukraine, how strong is Nato's unity?

BRUSSELS: After two years of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, NATO has mostly maintained its unity against Moscow. The alliance has grown with Finland's accession and, probably soon, Sweden's too.

Across Western capitals, there is agreement that a Russian victory in Ukraine could shift the international geopolitical order at the expense of the West's interests. Nonetheless, divisions exist. While the Baltic states advocate for stronger European support for Kyiv, other NATO members such as Hungary and Slovakia have voiced scepticism towards Ukraine. The outcomes of elections held last year in the Netherlands and Slovakia raised questions about NATO unity in defence of Ukraine. In November, Geert Wilders's far-right Party for Freedom won in the Dutch parliamentary election after campaigning in favour of slashing Amsterdam's military support to Kyiv. In September, Robert Fico's Slovak Social Democracy (SMER) party, which has been described as "pro-Kremlin", secured 22.9 percent of the vote in Slovakia's parliamentary election, ahead of all others.

But some experts say that the results are unlikely to weaken NATO's overall resolve. The elections were "worrisome because these leaders do not accept certain European norms", John Feffer, the director of Foreign Policy in Focus, told Al Jazeera. Yet Feffer does not see the polls representing a "tipping point" when it comes to NATO's unity. "Wilders in particular doesn't have a sufficient electoral majority - unlike [Prime Minister Viktor] Orbán in Hungary - to completely ignore past Dutch

policy, the positions of mainstream parties, or Dutch public opinion," he said. Matthew Bryza, who was the US deputy assistant secretary of state for Europe and Eurasia from 2005 to 2009, also thinks that those elections will not impact Western solidarity with Kyiv. Within the European Union, Hungary was recently alone in attempting to block additional military and economic assistance from Brussels to Ukraine to the tune of 50 billion euros (\$54bn), but the bloc "outmaneuvered" Orbán, explained Bryza. "The institution of the EU and the institution of NATO are stronger than one or even a couple of leaders with those views," he said. Furthermore, despite Slovakia's new government coming to power with a critical perspective on Ukraine, Bratislava has not since moved to undermine Western unity against Moscow. Additionally, as Christoph Schwarz, a research fellow at the Austrian Institute for European and Security Policy (AIES), told Al Jazeera, the outcome of Poland's recent elections has "reinvigorated the Weimar triangle between Berlin, Paris, and Warsaw and strengthened [NATO] overall."

Nonetheless, as the conflict continues, war fatigue is setting in across some parts of the Western world. "The best medicine against war fatigue in the support of Ukraine would be substantial gains and wins by Ukraine, which would require much more support by the West in terms of military aid," said Schwarz. "However, the longer such gains and wins for Ukraine fail to materialise, the more likely it will become that nationalist-isolationist factions will increase their

influence and even win upcoming elections, thereby exacerbating the lack of Western military support for Ukraine." Russia's alleged ability to conduct disinformation campaigns that disseminate anti-Western narratives is also a factor. "The concept of 'Ukraine fatigue' - the notion that policy support for Ukraine by Western democracies is bound to diminish over time - is a defeatist and self-fulfilling prophecy that has been exacerbated by the lack of consistent and high-profile direct-to-camera statements by leaders of global democracies explaining to their electorates the damage that not supporting Kyiv to defeat the Russian military in Ukraine would have on global security," Benjamin L. Schmitt, a senior fellow at the University of Pennsylvania's Kleinman Center for Energy Policy, told Al Jazeera. Beyond training, NATO's support for Ukraine is more political, rather than practical. While political support matters, what is most practically important is support from individual NATO members. It is difficult to exaggerate the extent to which this year's United States presidential election will impact Ukraine's future.

"When it comes to NATO's unity in support of Ukraine and against Russia's violations of sovereignty and territorial integrity, on the surface at least it would appear to be the case that everything is at stake in terms of the Biden versus Trump presidential race this November," said Bryza. Silja Bara R. Omarsdottir, a professor of international affairs at the University of Iceland, told Al Jazeera that she believes it is "the unity itself that is at stake." — Aljazeera

Argentina's poverty levels hit 57% of population

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP): Poverty levels skyrocketed to 57.4% of Argentina's 46 million people in January, the highest rate in 20 years, according to a study by the Catholic University of Argentina.

The findings quickly unleashed accusations between Argentina's former Vice President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner and the government of President Javier Milei, who came to power announcing a series of shock measures aimed at tackling the country's severe crisis. About 27 million people in Argentina are poor and 15% of those are mired in "destitution," meaning they cannot adequately cover their food needs, according to the study released over the weekend.

The UCA's social debt observatory is considered an independent and prestigious research space whose reports on poverty cover a larger geographical area than those conducted by Argentina's national statistics agency, INDEC. It also applies a methodology that addresses the problem with a more multidimensional approach and its findings

are seldom questioned by politicians and economists. According to the center's latest report, the increase in poverty levels in January was partly due to the devaluation of the Argentine peso applied by the Milei government shortly after taking office on Dec. 10. This resulted in an increase in the price of the country's basic basket - which includes food, services and non-food goods - and the basic food basket. Working- or middle-class households that do not receive benefits through social programs experienced the greatest impact, the study concluded. Eduardo Donza, a researcher with the social debt observatory, told The Associated Press that although inflation could slow in the coming weeks, the incidence of rising prices will continue to impact Argentinians and poverty would hit at least 60% of the population around March.

Milei, an ultra-liberal economist who is implementing a series of shock measures, including a sharp reduction in public spending, said that the fact that "six out of every 10

Argentines are poor" constitutes "the true inheritance of the caste model," which is what he calls the political class who has governed Argentina for the last 20 years. He later said that his government "would give its life" to bring about a change in the socioeconomic reality of Argentina. Former Vice President Fernández de Kirchner (2019-2023), who also governed between 2007 and 2015, attributed the poverty problem largely to the policies of conservative President Mauricio Macri (2015-2019), who succeeded her in office, and to the adjustments applied by the current administration. She said that, starting in 2018, "with a debt in dollars and the return of the IMF (...), we went backwards." The reality presented by the study, Fernández de Kirchner said, "shows that today we are worse off than in 2004." The government responded to Fernández de Kirchner asking her to "be silent." Presidential spokesman Manuel Adorni said during his daily press conference, that the former president is "one of the most relevant figures in the last 20 years of Argentina's decline."

Australia plans to build biggest navy since World War II

SYDNEY: Australia has announced a decade-long plan to double its fleet of warships and boost its defence spending by an additional 11.1 billion dollars (\$7.25bn). Defence Minister Richard Marles said on Tuesday that the government's plan would eventually increase the navy's surface combatant fleet to 26 from 11, the largest since the end of World War II.

He cited concerns over rising geopolitical tensions as competition between the United States, its allies and China heats up in the Asia Pacific region. Under the new plan, Marles said Australia will get six Hunter-class frigates, 11 general-purpose frigates, three air warfare destroyers and six state-of-the-art surface warships that do not need to be crewed.

At least some of the fleet will be armed with

Tomahawk missiles capable of long-range strikes on targets deep inside enemy territory - a major deterrent capability. "It is the largest fleet that we will have since the end of the second world war," Marles told reporters. "What is critically important to understand is that as we look forward, with an uncertain world in terms of great power contest, we'll have a dramatically different capability in the mid-2030s to what we have now," he added. "That is what we are planning for and that is what we are building." The minister said the large optionally crewed surface vessels (LSOV), which can be operated remotely and are being developed by the US, will significantly boost the navy's long-range strike capacity. The vessels could be inducted by the mid-2030s. Australia will also take steps to accelerate the procurement of 11 general-

purpose frigates to replace the ageing ANZAC-class ships, with the first three to be built overseas and expected to enter service before 2030.

"This decision we are making right now sees a significant increase in defence spending ... and it is needed, given the complexity of the strategic circumstances that our country faces," Marles said. The announcement - which comes amid Australian plans to procure at least three US-designed nuclear-powered submarines - would see Canberra increase its defence spending to 2.4 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), above the 2 percent target set by its NATO allies. Experts say that taken together, Australia is poised to develop significant naval capability. But the country's major defence projects have long been beset by cost overruns,

government U-turns, policy changes and project plans that make more sense for local job creation than defence.

Michael Shoebridge, a former senior security official, told the AFP news agency that the government must overcome past errors and had "no more time to waste" as competition in the region heats up. Shoebridge said there must be a trimmed-down procurement process, otherwise, it will be a "familiar path that leads to delays, construction troubles, cost blowouts - and at the end, ships that get into service too late with systems that are overtaken by events and technological change". Wooing specific electorates with the promise of "continuous naval shipbuilding" cannot be the priority, he said. "This will just get in the way of the actual priority: reversing the collapse of our navy's fleet." — Aljazeera

Chinese Coast Guard boards Taiwan tourist boat, triggers panic

TAIPEI: Chinese Coast Guard officials briefly boarded a Taiwanese cruise ship in an incident the government in Taipei said triggered panic among the people of the self-ruled island. The incident near the Taiwanese Kinmen Islands, off the coast of the Chinese cities of Xiamen and Quanzhou, came a day after Beijing said it would step up patrols in the area in response to the deaths of two Chinese fishermen who drowned last week while being chased by the Taiwanese Coast Guard.

In a statement, Taiwan's Coast Guard said six Chinese officials boarded the Taiwanese tourist boat, which was carrying 11 crew members and 23 passengers. The Chinese officials checked the boat's route plan, certificate and crew licenses and left about half an hour later. Taiwan's Coast Guard said it dispatched its personnel to the scene. They arrived shortly after their Chinese counter-

parts left the cruise ship and "accompanied the ship all the way back to Shuitou Port" in Kinmen, it said. There was no immediate comment from Beijing, which claims Taiwan as its territory.

In Taipei, Kuan Bi-ling, the head of Taiwan's Ocean Affairs Council, condemned Beijing's actions. "We think it has harmed our people's feelings and triggered people's panic. That was also not in line with the interest of the people across the strait," she told reporters, adding that it was common for Chinese and Taiwanese tourist boats to accidentally enter the other side's waters. "Boats like these are not illegal at all," she said. Kinmen is located just 5km (3 miles) from China's Xiamen and has been controlled by Taipei since Chiang Kai-shek's nationalists fled to Taiwan in 1949 after losing a civil war with Mao Zedong's communists. Fishermen from Taiwan and China

regularly sail the stretch of water between Kinmen and the Chinese mainland. And on Wednesday, Taiwan said two of four Chinese fishermen died after their boat capsized while fleeing the Taiwanese Coast Guard.

It said their boat was fishing "within prohibited waters" about one nautical mile (1.8km) away from the Kinmen archipelago. The other two survivors remain in Taiwan's custody. China issued a furious condemnation and its coast guard said it would step up law enforcement patrols in the area. The patrols are intended to "further maintain the order of operations in relevant waters and protect the safety of fishermen's lives", Gan Yu, a spokesperson for the Chinese Coast Guard, said in a statement. Beijing has also called for the immediate release of the detained Chinese nationals. Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council - which handles issues regarding Beijing -

announced that the families of the detained Chinese crew members are expected to arrive in Kinmen on Tuesday.

The Straits Exchange Foundation - a semi-official Taiwanese body that handles technical and business affairs with China - said it "will also send personnel to Kinmen to provide humanitarian care to the mainland family members and assist them in handling the aftermath", it said. The incident has added to escalating tensions in the Taiwan Strait. Chinese President Xi Jinping has in recent years ramped up rhetoric of unifying China and Taiwan, while the Chinese military has stepped up pressure on the island by deploying warplanes and naval vessels around it on a near-daily basis. Taiwan had a presidential election in January, which saw the win of Democratic Progressive Party's Lai Ching-te - a candidate Beijing considers a "separatist". — Aljazeera

Four people hit by lightning near Sydney Opera House

SYDNEY: Four people in Australia have been taken to hospital after being struck by lightning near the iconic Sydney Opera House, authorities have said. The four victims, including a 36-year-old couple and a 19-year-old man, were sheltering under a tree near the famous landmark during a violent storm when they were struck, ambulance workers said.

The New South Wales ambulance service's Dominic Wong told reporters that the victims suffered burns and presented with cardiac symptoms after the incident at Sydney's Botanic Gardens. "They all had a brief loss of consciousness," Wong said. "If you're boating, you should get ashore and seek shelter, and you should not be seeking shelter under a tree." The four, two men

and two women, were taken to hospital after being treated at the scene by paramedics and are in a "serious and stable" condition, according to authorities. Sydney was battered by intense thunderstorms that left more than 10,000 households and businesses without power and caused serious delays to air passengers and road and rail commuters. About 75,000 lightning strikes were

detected within 100km (62 miles) of Australia's largest city between 11am and 2pm, according to Weatherzone's Total Lightning Network. Sydney airport's main runway was closed for about 20 minutes earlier in the day after a lightning strike tore a hole in the tarmac, resulting in the cancellation of more than 30 departures and delays to about 340 services. — Aljazeera

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Israeli apartheid and ICJ impaired justice

AMID the apartheid Israeli regime preparing to launch a military offensive in Rafah and scale up its restrictions against Palestinians barring them from accessing the most sacred Islamic religious site, Al-Aqsa mosque during the upcoming Ramadan. The United Nations's top court is set to open historic hearings into the legality of Israel's 57-year occupation of the Palestinian territories. The week-long proceedings began at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on Monday. The court will focus on Israel's occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem since 1967. According to the reports, Palestinian representatives will speak first and will argue that the Israeli occupation is illegal because it has violated three key tenets of international law, wherein, the Jewish state has violated the prohibition on territorial conquest by annexing large swathes of occupied land, violated Palestinians' rights to self-determination and imposed a system of racial discrimination and apartheid. Israel refused to appear before the court however it has submitted a written statement in its defence.

Historically, the United Nations has consistently maintained that Israel's occupation of the West Bank is illegal under International law. The UN appointed a Commission of Inquiry that specifically highlighted the permanence of this occupation and the de facto annexation policies pursued by Tel Aviv over the past decades. Those policies involve seizing, annexing, fragmenting, and transferring illegally occupied Palestinian land to Jewish settlers with the ultimate aim of demographic change in the globally recognized disputed territory. The Israeli government has built 146 illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank, which are home to more than 500,000 Jewish settlers. The West Bank settler population has grown by more than 15 percent in the last five years, which endangers the cultural existence of the Palestinian people by erasing or appropriating symbols of Palestinians' identity in the forcefully occupied region.

Israel withdrew its military from the Gaza Strip in 2005 but retained its controls on access, borders, and air space leading to a global debate about the nature of Israeli occupation/ presence or a kind of blockade of Palestinian territory under the global law and UN charter. Similarly, the Jewish Army captured the historic city of East Jerusalem from Arabs and later declared its future capital further irking the Palestinian Muslims and complicating the Palestine issue. Presently, over 200,000 Israeli settlers live in East Jerusalem, which Israel considers to be neighborhoods of its capital.

Historically, Israel has implemented the Settlement Enterprise attitude by maintaining and consolidating its permanent control over occupied territories which is a clear violation of international law. The Jewish state enforced restrictive urban planning, and zoning policies and contained Palestinian land through the construction of walls, barricades, land, sea, and air blockades turning the occupied territory into an open prison. The Israeli authorities also illegally made expropriation, and exploitation of land and natural resources of the Palestinian state. The case arrived at the world's top judicial forum after the UN General Assembly (UNGA) voted by a wide margin in December 2022 to ask the 15-judge panel for a non-binding advisory opinion on the Israeli occupation.

Years-long delay and ruckus at the UN indirectly supported Israel's illegal occupation and unlawful actions in occupied Palestinian land. The UN Security Council failed to adopt an impartial resolution due to excessive use of discriminatory veto power by the United States which protects Israel's core interests at all forums. In the presence of a high level of discrimination and bias at the UN Security Council, the UN General Assembly and the ICJ like nonbinding forums had been left to deliver justice on important global issues relating to the weak nations. At the Hague court, the core Muslim world including victim Palestinians, the OIC, the Arab League, and the African Union will present their arguments in support of the Palestine cause. The result is unsure, however any effective verdict in favor of Palestinians is less likely to come that reduce their suffering and resolve their agonies. Previously, the ICJ announced an impaired decision over South Africa's petition regarding the ongoing Palestinian genocide at the hands of Israeli troops, now The World Court faces another test of its adjudicators regarding their professionalism, consciousness, and impartiality. The Muslim world and the global community wait anxiously for how Hague judges define Israel's apartheid policies and what kind of egalitarianism they would serve regarding the fundamental rights of Palestinian people in their occupied homeland.

Political resilience versus political inclusion

PRESIDENT Dr Arif Alvi has recently noted that political inclusion is imperative for financial inclusion to put the country on the path of progress and prosperity. He hailed millions of young voters who had expressed their confidence in the democratic system. According to him, if youth confidence in the system was shaken, it would not be in the country's interest and asked the civic groups to respect the mandate of the people. The President further told his countrymen that capable people were being kicked out of politics and blockage of social media websites in Pakistan was due to the lack of intellectual capacity to handle criticism. The President was of the view that financial inclusion was not possible without the political inclusion of the people as excluding them from the development process could have repercussions for the country.

The President has made a thought-provoking sermon regarding the blessings attached to the democratic process and the importance of youth inclusion into the political system in the country. President sensitized the political parties to honor the public verdict and uphold the confidence of the voters who endorsed their support during the nationwide elections on February 8. In fact, the voters have fulfilled their national obligations by unprecedented participation in the recent polls, now it is the turn for political groups to resort to subdue before the public verdict and play a constructive role in the democratic process without sliding into controversies and mutual tussles on mere accusations and assumptions. The PTI has grabbed a majority of the seats in the National Assembly hence the PTI leadership must display resilience and team spirit while allying with its like-minded groups to form government in the center. However, if the PTI fails to do so then the PML-N-PPP alliance should form a coalition government and endeavor to secure democracy and political stability in the country, which is of utmost importance for sustainable economy and growth.

Ahead of a potential swap from his position, President Alvi has once again started political advocacy for his party. However, the country can't afford further division and any political crisis at this crucial period. The nation hopes for a constitutional role from the President in the movement. So the country could sail through the critical transition period safely and smoothly. The elected leadership could assume the ruin of the government in a conducive political environment, and work for the development of the country and the well-being of the people.

The most WANTED....!!!



Get ready for Gaza war to shift to West Bank

Chris Doyle

IF in doubt, escalate. This may as well be the motto for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu since Oct. 7. This is a man for whom "total victory" equals total destruction and for whom peace may mean prison. Bibi knows the polls. He knows that the knives are sharpened and at the ready; that the ideas of March are fast approaching for this Israeli Caesar.

Until that day of reckoning, when everyone expects him to be unceremoniously ousted from his residence in Balfour Street, Netanyahu feels he has no choice but to go all in. The likelihood is that he will not hesitate to order a full-scale ground invasion of Rafah in the coming days. He is prepared to risk Israel's relations with the US, with regional partners and even Israeli security for this end. In this, it must be remembered that he has the backing of many mainstream Israeli politicians, including his likely successor Benny Gantz. Many Israelis, including many of the families of the 134 remaining hostages, believe Netanyahu has sacrificed them in the cause of his own political survival.

If the above analysis is broadly accurate, Netanyahu has a massive problem when some form of calm descends on what remains of Gaza. When Rafah is flattened, with no doubt the percentage of destroyed and damaged buildings in Gaza heading more in the direction of 80 percent from its current 60 percent, major Israeli operations will inevitably be scaled back. Even for Netanyahu, dropping expensive bombs on rubble makes little sense. The assumption must be that the medium-intensity conflict with Hezbollah is not one that the Israeli government wishes to escalate. The risks to all are just too high, too punitive.

This leaves the West Bank, including Jerusalem. Here, Netanyahu can secure the full backing of his coalition and the ever more powerful settler movement for a major onslaught, up from the mid-level variety currently in play. Remember that, even for all those in Israel who have pushed for the re-colonization of the Gaza Strip, the West Bank is indis-

putably the big prize. The settlers have been busily pushing Palestinians off their lands in Area C, which makes up some 62 percent of the West Bank - another process of ethnic cleansing alongside the massive process in Gaza. As the Israeli group Peace Now has reported, 2023 was, "for the settlement enterprise, probably the best year since the Oslo Accords," with record numbers of units advanced. Some 26 new outposts were

Palestinians - the settlers will establish a raft of new outposts to formalize the theft of land. The Palestinians in the West Bank have already been softened up. Israeli armed forces have been targeting much of the north, including invading refugee camps in Jenin, Tulkarem and Nablus.

Since Oct. 7, the Palestinian economy in the West Bank has been squeezed ruthlessly by the Israeli authorities.

Remember that, even for all those in Israel who have pushed for the re-colonization of the Gaza Strip, the West Bank is indisputably the big prize. The settlers have been busily pushing Palestinians off their lands in Area C, which makes up some 62 percent of the West Bank - another process of ethnic cleansing alongside the massive process in Gaza. As the Israeli group Peace Now has reported, 2023 was, "for the settlement enterprise, probably the best year since the Oslo Accords," with record numbers of units advanced. Some 26 new outposts were established and 21 Palestinian communities forced from their homes.

established and 21 Palestinian communities forced from their homes. But if there was to be a major Israeli military operation akin to Operation Defensive Shield in 2002, the settlers would expect far more territorial plunder. Various areas would be in their sights. In the South Hebron Hills, the settlers see a job to be completed. East of Ramallah has also been a target zone. In the Jordan Valley, 20 Palestinian families had been kicked off their lands by mid-December last year. Israeli soldiers have denied Palestinians access to water as another way to force them off their land. Thousands of settlers have been armed, given military uniforms and incorporated into "regional defense" battalions. Many of these settlers have a proven track record of violence against Palestinians.

Once an area is "sterilized" - an official term meaning that it is free of

Palestinians have not been able to work in Israel or in settlements. Draconian restrictions on movement have likewise served to cripple economic activity. Last October, half of Palestinian farmers were unable to harvest their olives as a result of Israeli restrictions, according to estimates by the Palestinian Farmers' Union. The Israeli measures have included blocking the entrances to numerous Palestinian villages, immiserating the lives of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. These are the most intense and devastating series of closures since the height of the Second Intifada. All of this is exacerbated by Israel holding on to Palestinian customs revenues. How will all of this be ignited? The fast-track option for Netanyahu is Jerusalem. This is the tried and tested way to set the West Bank on fire. Ramadan is approaching. Tensions in the Old City will rise, as

ever. This may well be the time for Netanyahu to foment the explosion. He has done so before. In some ways, it would be the reverse of 2014, when Jerusalem got out of control and Netanyahu turned to invading Gaza. This time, smashing up Jerusalem may follow Gaza.

The radioactive core of this will be Al-Aqsa. Any actions or even rumors of actions to change the status quo there typically leads to a Palestinian reaction. Netanyahu will wink at the settler extremists, who know all too well how to provoke their Palestinian neighbors. The other old city that could be set alight is in Hebron. This is home to some of the most violent extremist settlers, the ideological brethren of Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir. They also see an opportunity to eject the Palestinians from the center of this ancient Palestinian city.

Ben-Gvir can sense an opportunity to foment discord. "We should not allow residents from the (Palestinian) Authority to enter Israel in any way" during Ramadan, he said. "We cannot take chances and risks ... It can't be that women and children are hostages in Gaza and we allow Hamas victory celebrations on the Temple Mount." Israeli media reports suggest Netanyahu agrees with him. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians worship at Al-Aqsa during Ramadan. In recent years, this month has been particularly fraught. All this is massively dangerous, including for Israel. Inflaming the West Bank and violating Al-Aqsa could tip the whole region to the upper levels of conflict. How will Hezbollah react, let alone other groups?

Can anything or anyone stop Netanyahu taking the region onto this perilous roller coaster ride? The answer is yes, but the signs that this will happen are slim. His Israeli opponents have not kicked him out. President Joe Biden has all the tools, all the levers. The questions are about his motivation and will. As yet, both have been found wanting. So, do not be surprised when the carnage shifts from Gaza to the West Bank. Netanyahu needs a forever war and he knows how to deliver.

US must be held accountable for its 'war on terror' crimes

Yumna Rizvi

ON January 16, the European Court of Human Rights issued an important ruling in the context of accountability for abuses perpetrated during the United States-led "war on terror". In the case of *Mustafa al-Hawsawi v Lithuania*, the court found that the latter violated the European Convention on Human Rights due to its complicity in the CIA's secret detention programme and its mistreatment of al-Hawsawi, a Saudi national.

Lithuania was ordered to pay compensation to the victim worth \$108,660 for the time he was at "Detention Site Violet", a CIA black site it hosted. Al-Hawsawi is currently detained at the Guantánamo Bay detention centre, alongside 29 other Muslim men. This judgment is the latest in a series of court rulings holding European countries accountable for their involvement in post-9/11 abuses. The European Court previously ruled against Poland, Romania, Italy and Macedonia.

Other European institutions, including the European Parliament and the Council of Europe, as well as individual European countries, have also taken measures for accountability, although they have not always been ideal. The UK paid over \$28.8m to Iraqi victims for documented war crimes and abuses during its involvement in the US-led invasion of Iraq. Additionally, compensation was provided to British citizens detained in Guantánamo and to two Libyan families who were kidnapped and tortured with the help of British intelligence. However, the UK abandoned an independent inquiry into post-9/11 extraordinary rendition and torture by its forces and closed an investigation into alleged crimes in Iraq.

Italy convicted in absentia 23 Americans, including CIA agents and an air force colonel, for kidnapping Hassan Nasr, an Egyptian imam based in Milan and handing him over to Egypt, where he was tortured. An Italian court also sentenced the former military intelligence chief and his former deputy to 10 and nine in jail respectively for their involvement in the case. Sweden compensated Mohammed Alzery and Ahmed Agiza, who were forcibly deported to Egypt at the request of the CIA and tortured. Prosecutors also opened investigations in France, Portugal and Spain over the CIA's use of their airports for renditions, although they did not result in formal charges. There remains an ongoing criminal investigation into CIA activities in Poland. Canada, too, apologised and paid \$8.1m to Omar Khadr, a Canadian national, over its role in his imprisonment in Guantánamo; it also compensated Maher Arar, another Canadian national, with the same amount over its role in the US government's decision to deport him to Syria, where he was detained for a year and tortured.

While these court cases and settlements highlight efforts to bring to justice European and other countries complicit in the abuses perpetrated during the "war on terror", they underscore

the persistent lack of accountability for the US, its chief architect and leader. As a state party to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the US is obligated to provide redress to survivors of torture carried out by its government forces. But legal barriers have often prevented survivors from pursuing justice in US courts.

By invoking the state secrets privilege, for example - most recently used in the *United States v Zubaydah* case - the government can withhold information it deems sensitive to national security. In the lawsuit filed by Abu Zubaydah, a Saudi-born Palestinian man currently held in Guantánamo, the defence sought evidence about his torture that the government argued would harm national security; the Supreme Court ruled in the government's favour. Similarly, historically, court dismissals, have been the result of the US government citing immunity - which has protected its forces as well as private contractors.

The US has also bypassed global and regional instruments of justice. It has warned of reprisals against the International Criminal Court if it launches an investigation into US crimes in Afghanistan. Additionally, it maintains that the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man is not binding, rendering decisions and recommendations from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) nonbinding. In 2020, the IACHR found the US responsible for the torture, abuse and indefinite detention of Djamel Ameziane, a former Guantánamo detainee, and recommended the US compensate him, which the US government has not done so far. There have been only minimal steps towards accountability within the US judicial system. An investigation into abuse at Abu Ghraib prison resulted in the court martial of 11 low-level soldiers. An Obama-era investigation into 101 CIA interrogations that used "enhanced interrogation techniques" found only two merited further inquiries. In 2012, the investigation was closed without further action.

And despite 18 dismissal attempts, a lawsuit launched by four Iraqi torture victims against government contractor CACI International for torture at Abu Ghraib is heading to trial. These lawsuits and investigations have fallen short of adequately addressing the scale and severity of the harm inflicted on victims during the "war on terror". Lack of redress further compounds the suffering of those who have endured physical and psychological trauma. To date, no senior government or military official has been held responsible for post-9/11 policies and actions.

The US remains unwilling to face accountability for acts of torture, as it continues to detain 30 men in Guantánamo in conditions that amount to ongoing cruel treatment. It is long past due for a reckoning. The US is not above international law and must not be allowed to continue dodging justice.

China must embrace new era of AI revolution

Chen Zhi

THE artificial intelligence leader OpenAI has unveiled a new AI model named Sora, which it asserts can generate "realistic" and "imaginative" 60-second videos based on brief text prompts. Artificial intelligence is rapidly permeating every industry. In 2023, within two months of its launch, ChatGPT, a tool developed by OpenAI, ignited a global competition in the AI sector. While the risks associated with AI have heightened regulatory concerns, it's evident the world is on the doorstep of a new era of AI development.

Beyond the core areas of chips and data, innovation in applications, especially in creating unique scenarios, is crucial. It determines whether AI technology can truly transform into tangible economic value and complete the commercialization loop. In response to the challenge posed by ChatGPT, major global players and start-ups alike are rolling out new products. Google has introduced Bard, now known

as Gemini, a chatbot, and integrated AI-enhanced features into its products, and Microsoft has launched Bing chatbot and introduced AI-driven collaborative tools in its products. Compared with traditional AI, Generative AI has four major advantages: automation, personalization, creativity and interpretability. No wonder GenAI has become a driving force of the new wave of innovations.

From media to finance, healthcare to transportation, GenAI, as a representative of universal AI technology, is making inroads primarily into the "soft" aspects of the service and manufacturing sectors. The sectors with the highest potential value include retail, consumer goods, finance, pharmaceuticals and medical products. On the other hand, AI-generated content (AIGC) and learning from data elements are enabling machines to autonomously generate entirely new texts, images, videos and other multimedia contents. Concentrated in

creative sectors such as advertising, marketing, game creation and art design, AIGC is reshaping their future. As for customer services, multi-turn human-machine dialogues are enhancing user experience while saving the cost of manual customer service.

In medical technology, AIGC, based on real case data, can address the data scarcity problem, providing data generation services, among other things, for developing medicines, providing precision medicines, and facilitating magnetic resonance imaging. In chip development, AIGC-produced 3D models can help optimize the positioning of chip components, significantly shortening product development cycles to just a few hours. AI applications in industries such as finance and education are in the early stages of small-scale pilots. AI can monitor, process and analyze large volumes of

financial data, assisting financial institutions in making more accurate data forecasts and decisions. It can identify potential fraudulent activities, strengthening the security and reliability of financial transactions. Quite a few Chinese commercial banks are already using GenAI technology, advancing the practical application of large-scale models and AI technologies such as computing clusters. As industrial-grade large-scale AI models gradually emerge, AI will become increasingly embedded in various stages of industrial production. General AI is being applied in design, intelligent manufacturing, quality management and autonomous driving. For instance, the integration of AI with exploratory data analysis is becoming a mainstream trend in chip design. AI large models enhance industrial robots' understanding of natural language commands, improving

their information processing and perceptual execution capabilities.

But AI has created risks, too, including the risk of inappropriate use, which can raise user-privacy concerns, potential moral and ethical risks, and the resulting risk of stringent regulations.

Countries across the world are paying close attention to the impact of AI-induced productivity on the workforce. Various international organizations' assessments suggest professions such as office and administrative support, legal and financial positions are generally vulnerable to the impact of AI. And the OECD has warned that 27 percent of professions face the highest

risk of being automated. In the global AI competition, both China and the United States prioritize AI, investing significant amounts of resources in the sector. But China's vast population, robust data collection capability, and continuous innovation of apps are propelling the development of the country's AI industry. To be sure, for both China and the US, the path to AI development is challenging and requires substantial effort. If the two countries collaborate and complement each other in terms of resources, they can leverage their relative strengths to get mutual benefits, promote technological progress, and ensure the safe, trustworthy and reliable application of AI.

The China Daily

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Corporate Japan deals an unwitting blow to US East Asia policy

JAPANESE trading giant Itochu's surprise announcement on February 5 that it was terminating its agreement with the Israeli defence contractor Elbit Systems has sent shockwaves throughout corporate Japan. Itochu stated specifically that they based their decision on the International Court of Justice ruling that Israel may be committing genocide in Gaza, and on the position of the Japanese government that the ICJ decision must be implemented "in good faith".

Itochu matters; it is a household name in Japan, being the third largest trading firm and one of the titans of the country's economy with a 2023 revenue of over \$104bn. Prominent trading companies like Itochu are also politically important, as they have historically been looked at as the captains of Japan's trade-based economy. Itochu's decision sends a very clear message about the acceptability of doing business with Israel. The decision puts Itochu in a different league from the many Western states and companies that have either ignored the ICJ ruling or disparaged the charges of genocide as "without merit". The governments of the United States, the United Kingdom, France and Germany, just to name a few, have continued to shower Israel with weapons and political support to continue the wanton slaughter of innocent civilians, in blatant violation of the ICJ's preliminary decision. Some Western governments have started to backtrack on their support, but words are cheap, and the flow of weapons continues.

Indeed, those governments have taken their criminal complicity to a new level, by terminating funding to UNRWA, the main UN agency serving Palestinian refugees, on the basis of no doubt spurious Israeli accusations that a handful of the organisation's 13,000 staff may have been involved in the October 7 attacks on Israel. One cannot help but question the timing of the "dodgy dossier" Israel submitted to its Western accomplices, literally hours after the ICJ issued its ruling that Israel was plausibly committing genocide. Always reciprocal to the Israeli narrative, the pliant Western media have duly highlighted UNRWA's imagined involvement in terrorism, while practically ignoring the ICJ ruling.

Saul J Takahashi

The defunding of UNRWA will almost inevitably result in famine amongst the over 85 percent of Palestinians in Gaza who are displaced - a textbook example of "deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about the physical destruction" of an ethnic group, which qualifies as an act of genocide under international law.

Generally, Japan is not an outspoken champion of Palestinian rights - indeed, the country joined its Western allies in stopping funding for UNRWA - or of human rights in general. Itochu, for its part, is one of the first Japanese companies to start human rights-based due diligence of its business operations (a process which clearly failed when they signed an agreement with Elbit in the first place). Nevertheless, in recent years Japanese companies have proven increasingly sensitive to public opinion on human rights and environmental issues. The failed 2020 Tokyo Olympics left behind a legacy of wasted public funds and corruption, but it at least served as a catalyst for corporate Japan to take the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (which state that companies have a responsibility to respect international human rights norms) more seriously.

That is not to say that Japanese companies are necessarily better than their Western counterparts - they are not - but in this instance, the demonstrations that had been taking place in front of Itochu's Tokyo headquarters, and the popular boycott of the Itochu-owned convenience store chain Family Mart in Muslim countries like Malaysia, clearly pushed the company over the line.

According to Itochu, the agreement with Elbit was to procure material for the Japanese military, not for the provision of Japanese technology or weapons to Israel (Itochu also stated they tied up with Elbit on the basis of a Japanese government request - a claim implausibly denied by the authorities). Assuming that is true, that makes the cutting of ties even more significant. Itochu has essentially accepted that doing business with Israeli military companies ipso facto results in complicity with Israeli genocide. It logically follows that relations

with companies - Israeli or not - that are involved with other Israeli violations of international law should also be terminated. That is exactly what the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) campaign rightfully calls for, to hold the apartheid state to account for its crimes. Itochu's decision is surely the harbinger of increasing Israeli isolation. The Western world has long been the primary front line of the BDS movement and the Israeli attempts to suppress it. The developments in Japan show, if there ever was any doubt, that BDS has truly gone global.

The decision by Itochu may also have reverberations far beyond Palestine, since Japanese remilitarisation has long been integral to the US's grand strategy in East Asia. After World War II, Japan adopted a pacifist constitution that prohibits the use of force to resolve international disputes. However, US pressure on Japan to play a larger military role in Asia has increased in recent years, as Americans get more and more anxious about Chinese challenges to US hegemony. What until then was a cautious Japanese approach changed dramatically in 2012, with the advent of the ultranationalist Shinzo Abe as prime minister. With little to no regard for public opinion, Abe rammed through extremely controversial bills and policies aimed at remilitarisation, in particular giving the military much greater latitude in fighting in concert with allied (read: US) forces even outside of Japan. Weapons exports and international joint development, long a taboo, became a government priority overnight.

Japan also proactively entered into alliances overtly aimed at keeping China in its place in the international pecking order, such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue. Abe finally stepped down in 2020, but the general direction has remained the same, and in 2022 the government jumped on Russia's invasion of Ukraine to push forward a near-doubling of the military budget.

From the get-go, stronger relations with Israel were integral to Japan's greater incorporation into the US military alliance. Heavy reliance on oil from Arab countries had made Palestine a traditionally sensitive topic for

Japanese foreign policy, but Abe abandoned all inhibitions, visiting Israel in 2015 and overtly pushing forward trade and defence agreements with the country. Murky information of joint weapons development with Israel surfaced shortly, only to be swiftly denied. Pro-Israeli puff pieces appeared in the conservative media, including ones praising Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's alleged virility as a brave man defending his country. The government also embarked on a campaign to strong-arm businesses into doing deals with Israel. Local chambers of commerce were strongly "encouraged" to visit Israel and forge partnerships. I personally received numerous calls from leading Japanese companies who were feeling official pressure, and yet were mindful of the reputational risk of doing business with Israeli companies involved in the colonisation of Palestine. They would beg me to point to a "clean" Israeli company they could do business with and not be targeted by the BDS movement. Of course, I had to tell them there was no such thing: The entire Israeli economy is built on the oppression of the Palestinian people and the theft of their land. Many of the companies eventually bowed to government pressure, but it is a sure bet they are urgently revisiting their portfolios now. Itochu's move to cut ties with Elbit Systems may mark the beginning of a new trend, and a major step back in Japan's remilitarisation and full integration into US' anti-China military grouping in East Asia.

Itochu's decision should be commended, and the BDS movement should continue its boycotts of companies complicit in Israel's abuses. Still, there is a limit as to how much can be expected from private companies, which at the end of the day exist to maximise profits. It is governments that shape the playing field for businesses, through laws and regulations. Governments need to make sure companies respect human rights and punish them when they fail. In particular, Western governments (and Japan) have to stop their shameful support of Israeli apartheid and genocide and make sure companies in their jurisdictions do the same. That is the only way to salvage the last vestiges of their decaying credibility.

Aljazeera

Brazil sidelined Bolsonaro. What can America do about Trump?

Eduardo Porter

BRAZIL had its January 6th on January 8th. In 2023, just two years after thugs descended on the US Capitol, Brazilian insurrectionists swarmed Congress, presidential palace and Supreme Court in Brasília to overturn an election won by President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of the Workers' Party. Like President Donald Trump in 2021, Brazil's populist authoritarian, Jair Bolsonaro, claimed he had been robbed.

The parallels between two deeply divided societies ran deep. Both were shaken by the disillusion of millions of voters who felt disenfranchised by a liberal order run by a cosmopolitan, often corrupt urban elite. Brazil looked even more polarized than the United States. Trump earned 46.9 percent of the vote in the 2020 presidential election. Bolsonaro got 49.1 percent in 2022. Just a year after the pro-Bolsonaro crowd mobbed the "Praça dos Três Poderes," however, the aftermath of the parallel assaults on democracy couldn't look more different.

Trump has established a seemingly unbreakable bond with roughly half of the US electorate. He is the hands-down favorite to be the Republican nominee in a rematch against Joe Biden in November. Bolsonaro, by contrast, can't even run for office. His passport was seized this month and is lucky not to be in jail. For those worried about the United States careening again toward political catastrophe, the question worth asking is how did Brazil dodge the bullet? Does Brazil's experience offer any lessons that might help protect American democracy from a candidate willing to do whatever it takes to restore his grip on power? The answer, unfortunately, is probably not.

For starters, in Brazil, the Supreme Court leans left. Most of the judges were appointed during the administrations of Lula (who was also president from 2003 to 2011), and his successor from the Workers' Party, Dilma Rousseff. Brazil also has institutional tools the United States lacks to preserve the electoral process. For starters, the United States lacks Brazil's law preventing anyone convicted of a major crime from running for office for eight

years. Under US law, Trump could run for president from prison. There's more. Even before Bolsonaro was caught plotting a real coup, which led to him losing his passport, the Superior Electoral Court - charged with overseeing election law - convicted the former president last year for falsely alleging that Brazil's electronic voting system was rigged. The United States lacks such a court because elections are a collection of efforts managed by the states. The Supreme Court weighs in only when voting rules and electoral laws run afoul of federal statute or the Constitution. That burdens its decisions with the weight of constitutional precedent. And it can get entangled with conundrums such as "maybe he did incite an insurrection and maybe that should bar him from office, but what would happen if we let Colorado do that?"

Brazil's most critical difference with the United States is not about its political institutions, though. It was able to move on from its attempted insurrection and reestablish a more sedate political equilibrium largely because it lacked America's Republican Party. Picking through the evidence of those volcanic months following Election Day in 2020, Princeton political scientist Frances Lee found much to commend in America's checks and balances. Despite the chaos that Trump wrought after he lost, the system stood up rather well for a while - and was bolstered by Republicans' sense of political self-preservation.

No matter what Rudy Giuliani and the lawyer with the Kraken threw at them, state courts rejected the miscellaneous allegations of electoral malfeasance from Trump's camp. GOP state legislatures and attorneys general resisted invitations to find extra votes; none refused to certify the election. GOP leaders unambiguously affirmed the legitimacy of Biden's election. When it mattered, Vice President Mike Pence behaved. After Trump was impeached by the House, Republicans in the Senate did vote against conviction.

But "that was a miscalculation," Lee told me. "Republicans thought he was no longer a threat." But when his poll numbers recovered, Republicans

clung to their instinct for political survival and caved, offering him the unswerving loyalty of half of America's two-party system.

All but 9 GOP representatives and all but one GOP senator (Susan Collins of Maine) elected to the 117th Congress in 2020 came from districts carried by Trump. As Lee wrote: "Members needed to maintain the trust and support of constituents who lacked confidence in the outcome of the 2020 elections and who, given the opportunity, might want to elect Trump to the presidency a second time." Brazil's political ecosystem would never have fallen into line like this simply because it doesn't have this sort of cohesion. Brazil has 28 parties in Congress, some defined by ideology, others by region. Members have been known to jump from one to the other. Cross-party alliances are made all the time. Pretty much everyone is out to make a deal.

Bolsonaro didn't have the kind of sway over his voting base needed to scare this bag of cats into line. "Bolsonaro's hold on his base was much weaker and more diffuse than Trump's hold on his base," Monica de Bolle from the Peterson Institute for International Economics told me. "Because the Brazilian political system is more fragmented." I'm going to throw out the wild guess that many Republicans would love to get out of MAGA's grip. The political conversation would likely be more productive if they felt protected from the former president's wrath, and were free to make a deal. Indeed, Trump might not enjoy the allegiance of roughly half of American voters if they could choose among a bunch of parties representing, say, the West, libertarians, agriculture, the South and whatnot.

Still, it's probably over the top to think the United States should, or could, try to embrace Brazil's transactional, free-for-all politics. To preserve American democracy, there is no choice but for the Republican political class to recover its guts. The partisans who run the United States' decentralized, politicized state and federal institutions must find it in their interest - or perhaps their sense of duty - to hold the line and refuse to give away the day to authoritarianism.

The Washington Post

Navalny gave us a glimpse of what Russia could be

Emily Parker

‘I know how easily people are killed in Russia,’ Alexey Navalny told me over a decade ago as I interviewed him for a book I was writing. "But in the end, it's a question of choice. You can keep silent, you can emigrate, or you can stay here and fight," the Russian democracy activist said.

Navalny - the greatest opponent to Russian President Vladimir Putin in recent memory - paid a steep price for that decision to fight. He died in a prison north of the Arctic Circle, the Russian prison service said on Friday. He was 47. At the moment, we still don't know the details of his death. But we do know that this is a tragic end to a brave dissident who long understood that his life was at risk. Navalny made headlines in 2020 after being poisoned with Novichok, a chemical nerve agent, and had been incarcerated since his return to Moscow from Germany in January 2021. He was sentenced to more than 30 years in prison.

His death may seem to suggest that there is no future for the Russian opposition. But that is not necessarily true. Navalny provided a glimpse of what Russia could be. He accomplished what had once seemed impossible. Navalny skillfully used the internet to undermine the widespread apathy that prevented people from challenging authority. People realized that they were not alone, and that collective action could get results. I first spoke to Navalny in 2010, when I was living in Moscow and doing research for my book about internet activism, "Now I Know Who My Comrades Are." Back then, he was a relatively unknown lawyer and shareholder activist who blogged about corruption.

Many Russians I spoke to back then were unhappy with the political situation but didn't see the point in street protests. After seeing a Moscow demonstration in July of that year, I understood why. Hundreds of protesters gathered in support of Article 31 of the Russian constitution, which guarantees freedom of assembly. They were simply asserting their right to assemble and the police were just dragging some of them away. Navalny understood that many Russians did not have an appetite for street protests, which were both dangerous and unlikely to change anything. He told me that in the 1990s, people demonstrated often and didn't see any improvements. He said they were tired of "mass political activity."

Navalny presented an alternative approach: online activism. "You have to propose to people the comfortable way of struggle," he told me. Rather than going out to a risky street protest, Russians could fight corruption without leaving the house. My book details a 2010 case in which US prosecutors said that the German carmaker company then known as Daimler, now the Mercedes-Benz Group AG, had bribed Russian officials. Navalny asked his followers to help him get a criminal investigation. He encouraged people to send petitions to the Interior Ministry and the prosecutor general's office. He asked his followers to post messages on the website of then-President Dmitry Medvedev.

The US Justice Department released criminal complaints in March 2010 against Daimler and three subsidiaries for corruption in at least 22 countries, including

Russia and China, and shortly thereafter, Russian and German subsidiaries entered agreements to plead guilty and pay criminal fines. The chair of the Daimler board said at that time, "We have learned a lot from past experience." Several years later, Navalny's campaign had not led to a deluge of convictions. But he was nevertheless energized. He said that he knew of at least a thousand letters that had been submitted. He had made a dent in the public apathy that undermined political action.

Navalny's crusade was just beginning. On his Web site, RosPil, he asked people to study public documents for signs of suspicious activity. This helped lead to the annulment of millions of dollars' worth of government contracts. Navalny's campaigns showed opponents of the Kremlin that they were not alone in their fight. Before long, the results of this online activism spread to the streets. In late 2011 and early 2012, tens of thousands of Russians participated in anti-government protests that were largely organized on social media and were among the largest demonstrations since the fall of the Soviet Union. The protests clearly spooked the Kremlin. Not long after, Russia began selectively limiting internet access. In 2014, Putin passed a law against protests. In 2022, Russia banned Facebook and Instagram and restricted access to Twitter.

But Navalny's team didn't give up. Instead, they took their fight to YouTube. In 2021, they published a video about an investigation that alleged a secret palace had been built for Putin at a cost of more than \$1 billion, but the Russian

leader has denied that it belongs to him. It was the most popular video on Russian YouTube in 2021. Today, that video has close to 130 million views and nearly 2 million comments.

Navalny's team has also used the video platform to voice opposition to the war in Ukraine. Navalny's fame and online activism probably did help protect him for some time. He had more than two million followers on X, formerly known as Twitter and was well-known outside of Russia. His adversaries perhaps calculated that the risks of killing him outweighed the benefits, as his death could spark an international backlash and mass protests in Russia.

But the world is very different now. People in Russia have laid flowers and candles and gathered to honor Navalny, with hundreds of mourners reportedly detained. As the war in Ukraine demonstrates, the Kremlin does not seem particularly deterred by international criticism. The internet fueled Navalny's rise but could not save his life. Still, it had a profound effect. Navalny used the internet to fuel a resistance movement that once seemed impossible in Putin's Russia. Navalny is gone, but his following is not. They saw, at least for a period, the power of collective action. The situation looks bleak now, but this story is not necessarily over. His wife, Yulia Navalnaya, has pledged to continue to fight for opposition, making the announcement on YouTube, where the video already has millions of views. Navalny put it best himself in the 2022 documentary, "Navalny." "You're not allowed to give up," the activist said. "If they decide to kill me, it means that we are incredibly strong."

CNN

Clear double standard for EU's subsidy probe

Li Yang

THE European Commission launched an in-depth investigation into the "potentially market distortive role of foreign subsidies" on Friday. The probe concerns Bulgaria's procurement of several electric "push-pull" trains as well as related maintenance and staff training services from CRRC Qingdao Sifang Locomotive, with EU antitrust regulators investigating whether the company, a subsidiary of CRRC Corporation, received a direct or indirect benefit from its parent company that enabled it to submit an unduly advantageous tender.

Although the investigation is a routine procedure under the European Union's Foreign

Subsidies Regulation, the highly politicized de-risking backdrop against which it is being carried out has raised concerns that some China-bashing EU lawmakers are taking advantage of the probe to block the otherwise normal deal between China and Bulgaria. Even though they never provide any concrete evidence to substantiate the charges, these politicians are good at smearing Chinese enterprises, such as those making solar power products and electric vehicles, as recipients of government "subsidies" that give them "an unfair advantage". The politicized intent behind their smears are evident from the studied silence they maintain over the wide use in public

projects in the EU of advanced chips manufactured by companies in the United States that do receive government subsidies.

It is also these politicians who urge the EU to provide subsidies on a similar scale on the grounds that it will prevent EU chipmakers from being lured to the US. The telecommunication, new energy and transportation products that Chinese companies sell to EU countries all have a competitive cost-to-performance ratio which originates from the scale effect of the Chinese manufacturing industry, the efficiency of the operation of the Chinese economic system, the long-term and huge input in research and development, and the

fierce competition that is unique to the Chinese market. It would be ridiculous to assume that a country with the economic size of China can win the world market in these key sectors simply by providing "government subsidies", which actually hinders the development of companies by nurturing corruption and distorting market competition.

But ironically some in the EU and the US are actually embracing what they oppose as a panacea to reboot their competitiveness, while their true intention is to attract, if not coerce, high-tech companies to withdraw from the Chinese mainland. It is they that try to resort to "potentially market distortive" subsidies in a bid to outcompete Chinese companies.

BASED on the current rate of progress in Asia and the Pacific, the Sustainable Development Goals will only be achieved by 2062 - a sobering reminder of how much work remains. Women and girls continue to face discrimination in accessing basic needs, and men face health and personal safety challenges which will need to be urgently addressed so everyone can meet the SDGs.

Our Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2024 shows that while the Goals are meant to be universal, their implementation varies significantly across different segments of the population. Factors such as sex, age and location contribute to existing inequalities and sometimes exacerbate them. Women and girls often face discrimination in accessing education and employment opportunities while men suffer from higher rates of intentional homicide, suicide and road traffic deaths.

These analyses reaffirm the need for granular data to better understand how different population groups are affected and how these lead to unequal outcomes. Governments can act upon these data insights to formulate policies which target the causes of inequality. However, half of the SDG indicators do not have sufficient data to properly assess their progress. Gender equality (Goal 5) and peace, justice, and strong institutions (Goal 16) continue to be the Goals with the least data. Filling the data gaps

requires more investment in data systems, as well as better coordination for effective data sharing and increased use of the data within countries and by international partners. We see positive developments in North and Central Asia, where Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have partnered with the United Nations to upgrade their national statistical systems to better support stateless populations. Initiatives such as universal registration, mapping of statelessness and improved domestic legal frameworks contributed to the movement to end statelessness in these countries.

There is some good news despite the average regional progress towards achieving all SDGs standing at 17 percent. Even though progress in the region is significantly behind schedule, the vision set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development remains as relevant today as it was in 2015. Countries in the region remain committed to the SDGs, as demonstrated by their voluntary national reviews (VNR). The VNR process provides an opportunity for countries to take stock of progress in implementation, share experiences and strengthen policies for accelerating SDG achievement.

In 2023, we saw an increased use of SDG indicators in these VNR reports, which highlights an increased commitment by countries to evidence-based SDG reporting, including through the

implementation of our National SDG Tracker.

Stepping up climate action is an immediate priority, and we need to strengthen our capacity to address climate-related hazards and natural disasters. This is of particular importance to small island developing States (SIDS), which stood out as the most in need of support. In the Pacific, we see examples of how enhanced data availability has informed environmental decisions. The establishment of national environmental portals contributed to improved monitoring of environmental policies and better management of conservation projects in countries such as Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. In the Maldives, coastal biodiversity conservation offers a powerful means to combat the threats posed by climate change while contributing towards several SDGs at the same time. Integrating robust climate action measures into national policies, strategies and plans is of paramount importance.

Despite this challenging landscape, we see countries and stakeholders stepping up to make steps towards achieving the 2030 Agenda. These initiatives can be transformative if they are sustained and scaled up. In essence, we need to continue advocating for data-informed decisions to be at the core of our actions for the SDGs. The realization of a sustainable, prosperous and inclusive future for all can only be achieved through our collective commitment and action based on high quality data.



Pakistan Stock Exchange gains 4.49 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) gained 4.49 percent on Tuesday, showing a nominal positive change of 0.01 percent, closing at 60,464.24 points against 60,459.75 points the previous trading day.

A total of 364,443,122 shares valuing Rs 10.928 billion were traded during the day as compared to 261,799,826 shares valuing Rs 9.907 billion the last day.

Some 349 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 174 of them recorded gains and 155 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 20 remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Bank of Punjab with 117,022,297 shares at Rs 6.27 per share, PIAC(A) with 19,289,500

shares at Rs 11.10 per share, and K-Electric Limited with 19,168,663 shares at Rs 4.26 per share.

Pakistan Tobacco Company Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 49.16 per share price, closing at Rs 1,030.00, whereas the runner-up was Indus Ismail Industries Limited with a Rs 45.00 rise in its per share price to Rs 1,200.00.

Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 490.00 per share closing at Rs 21,800.00, followed by Sapphire Textile Mills Limited with Rs 124.00 decline to close at Rs 1,600.00.

Rupee sheds 21 paise against dollar

The Rupee on Tuesday weakened by 26 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and

closed at Rs279.56 against the previous day's closing of Rs279.35.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs279.7 and Rs282.25, respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by 03 paise to close at Rs301.24 against the last day's closing of Rs301.27, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese Yen lost 01 paise to close at Rs1.85, whereas a decrease of 76 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs351.94 compared to the last closing of Rs352.70.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 05 paise and 06 paise to close at Rs76.11 and

Rs74.54 respectively.

Gold rates up by Rs 150 per tola to Rs 214,450

The price of per tola 24 karat gold increased by Rs 150 and was sold at Rs 214,450 on Tuesday compared to its sale at Rs 214,300 on last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs 128 to Rs 183,856 from Rs 183,728 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs 168,535 from Rs 168,417, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola silver increased by Rs 20 to Rs 2,570 whereas that of and ten gram silver went up by Rs 17.15 to Rs 2,203.36.

The price of gold in the international market remained stagnant at \$2,042, the Association reported.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister for Planning Development & Special Initiatives Muhammad Sami Saeed chairs National Price Monitoring Committee meeting to review prices of essential commodities.

Shipping activity at PQ

KARACHI (APP): Two ships, MSC Spring and Evrialicarrying Containersand Wheat, berthed at Container Terminal and Grain Terminal respectively on Monday.

Meanwhile four more ships, Maersk Brooklyn, Siamisam, Stefanost and Agia Eirini Force carrying Containers, LNG, Wheat and Coal also arrived at outer anchorage of the port during last 24 hours.

A total of six ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them, two ships, MSC Spring III and Evriali left the port on today morning, and another ship Haj Mohammad is expected to sail on today afternoon.

A cargo volume of 102,319 tonnes, comprising 50,580 tonnes imports cargo and 51,739 tonnes export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 3,005 Containers (1,030 TEUs Imports and 1,975 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are twelve ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them four ships, Maersk Brooklyn, Beks Nazik, Sea Champion and Simaisam & another ship Torm Elizabeth carrying Containers, Wheat, Canola seeds, LNG and Mogas are expected to take berths at QICT, MW-1, FAP, EETL and FOTCO on Tuesday, and Coal carrier M.V Jade Prosperity is due to arrive at Port Qasim on Wednesday.

Tokyo stocks close lower

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo stocks closed lower on Tuesday as profit-taking weighed on the market.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index slipped 0.3 percent, or 106.77 points, to 38,363.61, while the broader Topix index ended down 0.3 percent, or 7.39 points, at 2,632.30.

“With a dearth of clues for trade after the US market was closed on Monday, trade was mixed with profit-taking of shares that have risen and bargain-hunting of shares that are expected to rise further,” Iwai Cosmo Securities said.

“A wait-and-see attitude is growing ahead of earnings report of” US chip giant Nvidia, Daiwa Securities said. The dollar fetched 150.39 yen in Asian trade, against 150.17 yen in London on Monday.

In Tokyo, chip-making equipment manufacturer Tokyo Electron dropped 0.43 percent to 34,650 yen and chip-testing equipment maker Advantest fell 1.02 percent to 6,727 yen.

Nintendo, which tumbled 5.83 percent in the previous session after reports said its next-generation console would be delayed, ended down 1.11 percent at 8,263 yen.

Market heavyweight and Uniqlo operator Fast Retailing fell 0.86 percent to 41,700 yen.

Türkiye’s assets at \$326b

ISTANBUL (APP): Türkiye’s external assets totaled \$326.9 billion at the end of 2023, up 6% from end-2022, according to official data released Tuesday.

Meanwhile, liabilities against non-residents fell 2% to \$612.1 billion, Turkish Central Bank data showed.

The NIIP, defined as the difference between Türkiye’s external assets and liabilities, was at minus \$285.2 billion at the end of December, narrowing from minus \$316.1 billion at the end of the previous year.

Engro Fertilizers hails gas tariff revision

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Engro Fertilizers welcomes the fact that the government has taken a bold first step by removing the subsidy for fertilizer manufacturers that get their gas from the SNGPL network, which represents 60% of all fertilizer manufacturing capacity.

They have done that by increasing the feed stock prices from PKR 580/mmbtu to PKR 1,597/mmbtu, almost a 300% increase in the cost of producing fertilizer.

While this is a step in the right direction, the battle is half won, as the remaining 40% of fertilizer manufacturing capacity that is on the Mari network, is still on the subsidized price of PKR 580/mmbtu.

Pakistan’s current financial position is distressed, it is in a debt crisis, with the debt-to-GDP ratio already above 70 percent and more than USD 27 billion of foreign debt to be repaid by

November 2024. The country cannot afford further fiscal pressures or half measures that do not go all the way in solving Pakistan’s problems. The dependence on government subsidies must end, for Pakistan to really move forward and break away from the vicious cycle of debt.

Therefore, in the national interest of the country and to fix the problem at the source, we urge the government to completely remove all subsidies from the fertilizer sector. Only with the complete removal can the government free the nation from this debt and truly benefit the people of Pakistan.

With this complete removal, the government is expected to collect PKR 150 billion, which can then be used for targeted agricultural projects and initiatives that generate economic activity and growth in the country.

This is a fantastic opportunity for all fertilizer manu-

facturers to demonstrate that even without subsidized gas they are globally competitive. In fact, when everyone has the same gas price, it will encourage the manufacturers to become more efficient, lean and encourage capital investment in the fertilizer industry.

In addition, the fertilizer industry will emerge as a role model that can operate efficiently without any subsidies, thereby encouraging the government to potentially look at removing subsidies from other sectors of the economy as well.

In conclusion, we fully support the government in taking this first step to partially remove the existing subsidy given to fertilizer manufacturers. We encourage the government to continue with this bold strategy and completely remove all subsidies so that it can reduce its debt burden, promote efficiency, attract new investments, and help build a stronger future for Pakistan.

CCP approves acquisition of Fauji Cereals Business

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has approved the acquisition of M/s Fauji Foundation’s Fauji Cereals Business by M/s Fauji Foods Limited. The Fauji Foundation, established as a charitable trust for the welfare of ex-servicemen and their families, submitted a pre-merger application to the CCP under Section 11 of the Competition Act, 2010.

The proposed transaction involves the acquisition of the Fauji Cereals Business

by M/s Fauji Foods Limited through a Business Transfer Agreement.

M/s Fauji Foods Limited is a publicly listed company incorporated in Pakistan, primarily focused on the production and sale of dairy and allied products.

CCP’s assessment of the pre-merger application indicated that there were no overlaps between the merging parties in the areas of business activities such as Breakfast Cereals and Wheat, Barley & Porridge. Therefore, the CCP concluded that market conditions will remain

unchanged post-transaction, with no significant alteration to the competitive landscape in these product categories.

Following competition assessment, CCP concluded that the proposed transaction involves the acquisition of shares and does not suggest any substantial lessening of competition or the creation or strengthening of a dominant position in the relevant market. Restructuring will ensure the Breakfast Cereal business is consolidated under one arm and result in future profitability.

Tractor assembling grew by 67.21 per cent

ISLAMABAD (APP): Tractor assembling in the country during the first two quarters of the current financial year increased by 67.21 per cent as to the output of the corresponding period of the last year.

During the period from July-December, 2023 about 23,695 tractors were locally assembled as compared to the assembling of 14,171 tractors of the same period of last year, according to the data of Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.

As compared the corre-

sponding month of the last year, the tractor production in December 2023 grew by 141.43 per cent as 2,675 tractors were locally assembled as compared to the production of 1,108 tractors of the same month of the last year.

During the period under review, the manufacturing of machinery and equipments grew by 70.76 percent as against the assembling of the same period of last year.

The production of Large Scale Manufacturing Industries (LSMI) increased by

3.43 percent on Year-on-Year (YoY) basis during the month of December 2023 compared to the output of the same month of last year.

On Month-on-Month (MoM) basis, the large industry grew by 15.69 percent in December 2023 compared to November 2023, PBS reported.

However, the industry witnessed negative growth of 0.39 percent during the first half of the current fiscal year as compared to the corresponding period of last year.

China shares end higher as central bank cuts lending rate

Farhadov vows to foster Azerbaijan-Pakistan trade ties

LAHORE (APP): Ambassador of Azerbaijan Khazar Farhadov emphasized Azerbaijan’s strong commitment to fostering bilateral trade relations with Pakistan during his meeting with business community here at Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry (LCCI) on Tuesday.

He highlighted the commencement of direct flights between the two countries since last year by AZAL and PIA, and wished to expand flight connectivity, ultimately aiming for daily flights from various cities. The Ambassador stressed the key role of private sector in driving economic ties.

LCCI President Kashif Anwar extended a warm welcome to Ambassador, and acknowledged the enduring diplomatic, historical, and cultural ties between Pakistan and Azerbaijan.

Ambassador Khazar Farhadov expressed optimism regarding the significant increase in trade turnover between Azerbaijan and Pakistan, attributed to the introduction of direct flights.

He noted a substantial rise in the number of

Pakistani students studying in Azerbaijan, underscoring the importance of private sector engagement in fostering robust economic ties.

The Ambassador emphasized the need for market exploration, partnerships, and reciprocal investments between Pakistan and Azerbaijan, citing successful trade relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey as a model. He highlighted Azerbaijan’s position as a key international transport corridor and said that Azerbaijan’s Socar Trading company provides LNG to Pakistan. Farhadov stressed the importance of people-to-people contact and the accessibility of the Azerbaijani Embassy, expressing Azerbaijan’s consideration in participating in possible joint projects also under Pakistan’s SIFC.

He advocated for the establishment of preferential and transit trade agreements between the two countries and identified tourism as a promising area for collaboration, citing Azerbaijan’s reception of tens of thousands of Pakistani tourists every year. The Ambassador highly appreciated ten times increase in

direct and indirect, with contribution of SOCAR Trading, trade turnover in last two years.

The Ambassador also invited Pakistani rice exporter to avail the opportunities after Azerbaijan’s government has announced an exemption of customs duty on rice imports from Pakistan till December 31, 2027.

LCCI President Kashif Anwar underscored Azerbaijan’s strategic significance in the crossroad between Asia and Europe and emphasized on its prime location and abundant natural resources, which position it as a linchpin in regional trade and transportation networks.

While acknowledging the existing trade potential between the two countries, Kashif Anwar noted that the bilateral trade volume had not yet reached its full potential. He highlighted Pakistan’s exports of rice, textiles, and fruits to Azerbaijan, along with imports of urea from Azerbaijan.

He stressed the need for diversification in product lines and avenues of cooperation to maximize bilat-

eral trade opportunities, suggesting potential areas such as pharmaceuticals, surgical instruments, textiles, IT, and tourism for collaboration.

LCCI President emphasized the pivotal role of commercial sections of embassies in facilitating trade and fostering people-to-people contacts. He highlighted the recent Pakistan-Azerbaijan Bilateral Political Consultations, where discussions centered on deepening cooperation across various sectors including energy, IT, agriculture, and education. Anwar also mentioned ongoing efforts to finalize Preferential Trade and Transit Trade Agreements to further enhance bilateral trade.

Drawing attention to Pakistan’s Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), he encouraged Azerbaijani investors to explore investment opportunities across sectors such as defense, agriculture, minerals, IT, and energy. He also lauded the Punjab government’s initiatives to improve the business environment through streamlined processes at Business Facilitation Centers (BFC).

Pakistan’s regional exports increase 21.68% in 7 months

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan’s exports to the seven regional countries witnessed an increase of 21.68 per cent in the first seven months of the financial year (2023-24) as compared to the corresponding months of last year.

The country’s exports to the regional countries including Afghanistan, China, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, and the Maldives account for a small amount of \$2614.021 million, which is 14.54 per cent of Pakistan’s overall exports of \$17977.963 million during July-January (2023-24), State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) reported.

China tops the list of countries in terms of Pakistan’s exports to its neighbouring, leaving behind other countries such

as Bangladesh and Afghanistan.

Pakistan carried out its border trade with the farther neighbour Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, and Maldives.

Pakistan’s exports to China witnessed an increase of 44.53 per cent to \$1726.679 million in seven months of this year from \$1194.639 million last year while exports to Afghanistan witnessed a nominal decline of 0.08 percent from \$285.177 million to \$284.927 million.

The country’s exports to Bangladesh also decreased by 23.27 percent to \$367.776 million this year from \$479.357 whereas exports to Sri Lanka rose by 24.65 percent to \$227.254 million from \$182.313.

The exports to India decreased to \$0.150 million from \$0.153 million in the previous year.

Exports to Nepal increased by 2.38 per cent to \$1.887 million from 1843 million while to Maldives increased by 12.45 per cent to \$5.348 million from 4.734 million, it added.

On the other hand, the imports from seven regional countries were recorded at \$7153.643 million during the period under review as compared to \$6664.926 million during last year, showing an increase of 7.33 per cent.

The imports from China during July-January 2023-24 were recorded at \$6959.768 million against the \$6464.217 million during July-January 2022-23,

showing a decrease of 7.66 per cent during the period.

Among other countries, imports from India are worth \$120.260 million against the imports of \$104.772 million, an increase of 15.43 per cent while imports from Afghanistan decreased by 61.68 percent from \$13.389 million to \$5.130 million.

Meanwhile, imports from Sri Lanka increase to \$33.945 million from \$32.960 million whereas Pakistan imports from Bangladesh recorded \$ 33.853 million from \$48.690 million during last year.

The imports from Nepal into the country witnessed a decrease of 69.09 per cent from \$0.495 million to \$0.153 million, it added.

China shares end higher as central bank cuts key rate

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): China’s shares finished higher on Tuesday as its central bank announced a record cut to a benchmark lending rate in a bid to boost its struggling economy. The Shanghai and Shenzhen exchanges were buoyant Monday after the Lunar New Year, leading gains in most Asian markets thanks to a holiday boost that pushed spending above pre-pandemic levels.

But both were down in early trade Tuesday, as the People’s Bank of China announced it was lowering the five-year loan prime rate (LPR), used to price mortgages, from 4.2 to 3.95 percent. The markets ticked up by the close.

Beijing’s measures are intended to rally dwindling growth and counter rate hikes in other major

economies, as the world’s second-largest economy battles a prolonged property-sector crisis and a global slowdown.

The Chinese central bank’s moves, aimed at pushing commercial banks to grant more credit at better rates, was the largest reduction since the key LPR was revamped in 2019, Bloomberg reported.

While the rate cut may offer relief, Stephen Innes, of SPI Asset Management, suggested managing expectations. “The government is likely to prioritize piecemeal measures over implementing substantial fiscal stimulus packages,” he said.

“This cautious approach reflects a shift away from the previous ‘growth at all costs’ model, with current emphasis placed on achieving technological self-suffi-

ciency and ensuring macro-financial stability.”

With US markets closed Monday for a holiday, investors are eyeing major upcoming earnings reports as well as policy meeting minutes from the US Federal Reserve and European Central Bank that might offer insights about hoped-for interest rate cuts.

“Markets have adjusted to the idea that rate cuts would come later and probably be less important than what was originally priced,” Vincent Juvyns, global market strategist for JPMorgan Asset Management, told Bloomberg Television.

Data released Friday showed a greater-than-expected rise in US wholesale prices, crushing hopes of an early interest-rate cut by the Fed.

In Asia, Tokyo and Hong Kong shares rose at the open Tuesday, with investors awaiting further direction from Wall Street.

“The Japanese market is expected to move in a narrow range today as the US market was closed for a holiday, so there’s a dearth of fresh clues,” said senior market analyst Toshiyuki Kanayama of Monex.

Tokyo stocks closed lower, and Sydney, Seoul and Wellington were also down.

Anglo-Australian mining giant BHP reported an 86 percent slump in half-year net profit, hit by a writedown of its nickel assets and costs related to a 2015 Brazilian mining disaster.

London and Frankfurt opened lower, while Paris was slightly up.



In brief

Cholistan Rally reviewed

BAHAWALPUR (APP): The arrangements for the 19th TDCP International Cholistan Desert Rally and Cultural Festival were reviewed in a meeting chaired by Deputy Commissioner Zaheer Anwar Jappa. Various officials including GM Operations TDCP Wahid Arjumad, TDCP Official Misbah Isaq, Additional Deputy Commissioner Revenue Muhammad Sarwar, Additional Deputy Commissioner Headquarters Sumera Rabani, Assistant Commissioner Yazman Mujahid Abbas, Assistant Commissioner Ahmedpur East Faisal Ahmed, Assistant Commissioner Bahawalpur City Adeel Khan, CEO Bahawalpur Waste Management Naeem Akhtar, representative of Hobara Foundation Major (ret'd) Omar Mehdi, officers from Traffic Police, District Emergency Officer Rescue 1122, Civil Defense, Highways Department, Islamia University Bahawalpur, District Sports, and other relevant departments were present. Deputy Commissioner Zaheer Anwar Jappa directed that the arrangements for the TDCP International Cholistan Desert Rally be executed magnificently, covering aspects such as traffic management, parking, rally routes, craft and food stalls, and sports competitions in a splendid manner. Additional Deputy Commissioner Headquarters Sumera Rabani mentioned that on the occasion of the 19th Cholistan Desert Rally, car registration and technical inspection for the rally will take place on February 21. Furthermore, she informed that a qualifying round will be held in Cholistan on February 22, followed by the first round of prepared cars on February 23, and a stock category race along with a dirt bike race on February 24, as well as a cultural show.

Jota faces 'months' out

LIVERPOOL (Agencies): Diogo Jota faces "months" on the sidelines after damaging his knee in Liverpool's win at Brentford, adding to manager Jurgen Klopp's mounting injury woes as they chase Premier League glory. Saturday's 4-1 win victory in London on Saturday came at a heavy cost as forward Jota and midfielder Curtis Jones were both forced off in the first half. Jones left the stadium on crutches after injuring his ankle and Jota departed on a stretcher, while forward Darwin Nunez was also withdrawn with a knock. Goalkeeper Alisson Becker, Trent Alexander-Arnold and Dominik Szoboszlai will be sidelined for Liverpool's home match against struggling Luton at Anfield on Wednesday while Thiago Alcantara and Joel Matip remain out of action. Speaking about the injury situation on Tuesday, Klopp, whose team are two points clear of second-placed Arsenal, said the situation was "not great". "I would like to sit here and say we have absolutely no issues but obviously we have some," the Liverpool boss said on Tuesday. "So, not available is obviously Ali (Becker). That's a muscle injury where we don't know exactly how long it takes but definitely not for the foreseeable time coming back. "Then we have Diogo with a knee issue, is ruled out. Curtis, with a bone/ligament issue, ruled out.



MULTAN: Multan Sultans team players celebrating after taking the wicket of Islamabad United batsman Colin Munro during the PSL Twenty20 cricket match.

ITF Pakistan Zainab Ali Naqvi Memorial World Jr Cship kicks off

ISLAMABAD (APP): The ITF Pakistan Zainab Ali Naqvi Memorial World Junior Championship Leg-2 kicked off here at PTF -SDA Tennis Complex on Tuesday, in memory of the late Zainab Ali Naqvi, an upcoming junior tennis player, who tragically passed away last week in Islamabad.

A total of 48 players boys and girls from Kazakhstan, Turkey, USA, Hongkong, China, Russia, Belarus, Uzbekistan, South Korea, Romania, Switzerland, Sri Lanka, Holland and Thailand were participating in the Championships. As many as 30 Pakistani boys and girls were also participating in the Championships.

A ceremony was held at PTF Complex today to

dedicate Court No-1 'Zainab Ali Naqvi Court' of the Complex in memory of the late Zainab Ali Naqvi.

The dedication ceremony was graced by Zainab's parents, who had especially flown in from Karachi. Also in attendance were Senator Salim Saifullah Khan, Ex-President-PTF, Aisam ul Haq Qureshi, President of PTF, and a large number of foreign and local players' parents, coaches and tennis lovers.

Senator Salim Saifullah Khan and Aisam ul Haq paid rich tribute to the young and talented Zainab and expressed their condolences and deep sympathies to her parents.

In Boys Singles 1st Round: Xiuyuan Guo (CHN) beat Papangkorn (THA) 6-4, 6-2; Doruk

Elbirlik (TUR) beat Haider Ali Rizwan (PAK) 6-2, 6-4; Jacob Shen (HKG) beat Salar Khan (PAK) 6-1, 6-0; Ahmed Nael Qureshi (PAK) beat Ye Chan Choi (KOR) 6-1, 6-1; Ahtesham Humayun (PAK) beat Howard Chan (HKG) 6-3, 6-1; Hamza Aasim (PAK) beat Jun An (KOR) 6-4, 6-2; Amir Mazari (PAK) bt Nuran Wikramasinge (SRI) 6-3, 2-6, 6-2; Kaigaoe Kang (CHN) beat Akmal Arabdjanov (UZB) 6-0, 6-1; Bilal Asim (PAK) beat Par Chandragholic (THA) 6-1, 6-3; Shijie Chen (CHN) beat Asad Zaman (PAK) 6-0, 6-1; Ilya Kryukov (RUS) beat Ju Hun Choo (KOR) 6-2, 6-1; Dong Hyeon Euom (KOR) beat Ege Avci (TUR) 6-1, 6-1.

Messi kicks aside political rumors, clarifies Hong Kong absence

BEIJING (Agencies): Lionel Messi denied claims that his absence from a match in Hong Kong two weeks ago, which angered China, was a political statement. Instead, he clarified that it was due to an injury.

Despite being idolized by fans in China, the eight-time Ballon d'Or winner remained on the bench during Inter Miami's 4-1 victory in a pre-season tour match against a Hong Kong select XI on Feb. 4.

The nearly 40,000 sell-out crowd, who had paid upwards of 1,000 Hong Kong dollars (\$125) to watch the 36-year-old superstar play, expressed their disappointment by chanting "Refund!" and booing Messi and the team's co-owner, David Beckham, after the match.

Some nationalist politicians viewed Messi's absence as a deliberate snub to China, especially since the Argentine star was

fit enough to play for 30 minutes in a friendly match a few days later in Japan.

In a video posted on China's Weibo social media platform late on Monday, the World Cup-winning captain rejected claims that his no-show was "for political reasons."

"If that had been the case," he said, "I would not have traveled to Hong Kong in the first place."

"As everyone knows, I always want to play and be in every game," he said.

Messi spoke in his video of a "very nice and very close" relationship with China, a country with which he said he had "done a lot of things." His reason for not playing was injury, he said, specifically "inflammation of an adductor" muscle. Fans on Weibo reacted quickly to the video, some in support of Messi.

"I believe the player I have always loved would never look at his fans with

any kind of prejudice," wrote one user, adding, "he always values every fan."

"I still can't understand how such a supreme footballer, the greatest of all time, can be pilloried online to the extent that he is considered not to love China just for missing a friendly match," another fan wrote.

Not everyone was appeased.

"Turns out it's still hard to say sorry after all," read one Weibo comment.

"Give it a rest," said another. "Run off to Japan and drink sewage."

Messi starred last June when Argentina beat Australia in Beijing in a friendly, scoring in the opening minutes in front of an adoring crowd.

But next month's Argentina friendlies against Nigeria in Hangzhou and Africa champions Ivory Coast in Beijing were cancelled after Messi failed to play in Hong Kong.

Reeza Hendricks half-century guides Multan Sultans to ease past Islamabad United

MULTAN (Monitoring Desk): Reeza Hendricks scored his second consecutive half-century to guide Multan Sultans to a five-wicket win over Islamabad United in the fifth match of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 9 at Multan Cricket Stadium.

Multan Sultans, while chasing a meagre target of 145, lost Dawid Malan in the first over as Naseem Shah shattered his stumps.

However, captain Mohammad Rizwan and Reeza Hendricks's 71-run stand ensured smooth progress for the home team until Islamabad United captain Shadab Khan spoiled the party. Khan's leg-break thuds onto Rizwan's back-pad, prompting a huge appeal and the umpire giving that out.

The batter reviewed the decision, but to no avail and had to walk back after a responsible knock of 43 runs from 33 balls featuring six boundaries and two sixes. Hendricks continued his good form and top-scored for the Sultans with his second half-century.

He struck seven boundaries including one six on his way to 58 off 46 to put his team in a comfortable position before Tymal Mills sent him back to the pavilion. With run-a-ball required, Naseem Shah removed Khushdil Shah to force a late comeback for Islamabad United.

However, Iftikhar Ahmed and David Willey held on to their nerves, chasing the total on the penultimate ball. Shah led the bowling charts for the United with figures

of 2-27, while Imads Wasim, Mills and Khan managed one wicket each.

Earlier, Multan Sultans opted to bowl first and struck early with two quick wickets, reducing Islamabad United to 14-2 in 3.4 overs.

Agha Salman and Jordan Cox then joined hands to help the visitors recover after early blows with a solid partnership of 68 runs from 48 balls.

Cox was the chief contributor to the partnership with a 28-ball 41, laced with two boundaries as many sixes before Usama Mir got him lbw while attempting a switch hit.

Salman remained unfazed at his end, while Azam Khan came and gone after scoring 13 off 10 with a boundary and six. Abbas Afridi castled Imad Wasim in the next over to further slip the United to 105-5 in 14 overs before captain Shadab Khan joined Salman. Khan and Salman raised a 35-run stand to push the team's total to 140, however, Afridi dismissed both batters in a span of two deliveries to halt the recovery for the visitors.

Salman top-scored with an anchoring innings of 52 off 43, with the help of three boundaries and two sixes.

Mohammad Ali bowled the last over which saw the final three wickets falling, with Naseem Shah getting run out on the last ball to finish Islamabad United's innings at 144. Afridi and Ali returned with bowling figures of 3-29 and 3-19 respectively, while Mir claimed two wickets.

Naseem qualifies for pre quarter round of Asian Men Snooker

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's Muhammad Naseem Akhtar have qualified for the pre quarter round of the ACBS Asian Men Snooker Championship 2024 at Doha, Qatar. In the day 4th Matches, Pankaj Advani (India) beat Muhammad Naseem Akhtar (Pak) 4-3 (66-54, 71-64, 71-85, 28-74, 8-75, 69-21, 75-57) and Awaish Ullah Munir (Pak) beat Ziyad Alqabbani (KSA) 4-0 (66-24(57), 79-0(75), 96-11(58), 72-10).

National U16 One-Day Cup to commence on Feb 21

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): The National U16 One Day Cup 2023-24 is set to kick off on 21 February across three cities, Karachi, Faisalabad and Lahore. The 16 regional teams are divided into three pools with Pool A and B comprising five teams each while Pool C has six teams. In the 50-over tournament, Pool A games will be played in Karachi. The Pool B teams are stationed in Faisalabad while the Pool C games will take place in Lahore. The Pool games will end on 29 February and will be followed by a Triangular stage, set to take place in Faisalabad from 3 March to 7 March. The final of the tournament will be played on 9 March at Bohranwali Ground in Faisalabad.



DUBAI: Aryna Sabalenka in action against Donna Vekic of Croatia in the women's singles second round match.

Sabalenka crashes out to Vekic in Dubai opener

DUBAI (AFP): Reigning Australian Open champion Aryna Sabalenka suffered an opening round upset at the hands of familiar foe Donna Vekic, going down 6-7 (5/7), 6-3, 6-0 in Dubai on Tuesday.

Contesting her first match since her successful title defence at Melbourne Park, Sabalenka blew a 7-6, 2-0 lead to succumb to her Croatian opponent in two hours and 22 minutes.

The 31st-ranked Vekic, who now owns a 6-2 head-to-head lead in lifetime meetings against Sabalenka, was aggressive throughout the match and enters her next clash with big-hitting Romanian Sorana Cirstea searching for her first WTA 1000 quarter-final of her career.

"At all times I didn't give up. I didn't stop believing that I can win. I just kept fighting," said Vekic, who is 9-13 against top-five opposition. "To be honest, I didn't have big expectations coming to Dubai. Told my coach that I'm taking this week as half holidays. I can tell you I spent more time on the beach than on the court. Maybe that's a good way going forward," she added with a laugh.

In windy but warm conditions in Dubai, Sabalenka recovered from a break down then squandered a 5-3 lead before securing the opening set on her sixth opportunity on the 69-minute mark. The world number two leapt to a 2-0 advantage in the second set but Vekic struck back and claimed another crucial break in game eight to level the contest and force a decider.

With the wind in her sails, Vekic put together a nine-game winning run, outthitting her powerful opponent, to deliver a final-set bagel and book her place in the last 16.

Sakkari halts losing run Earlier on Centre Court, eighth seed Maria Sakkari snapped a three-match los-

ing streak and claimed her first-ever Dubai main-draw victory, on her fourth attempt, with a 6-2 6-4 triumph over in-form American Emma Navarro. After suffering opening round exits in Abu Dhabi and Doha, Sakkari was admittedly nervous ahead of her clash with Navarro, who is already a title-winner in 2024 and has amassed 13 victories in the first two months of the season.

"It was very tough. Last night I couldn't sleep just because I was overthinking about it and it wasn't easy. No one wants to keep losing first round. But I told myself to treat it as the first match of the season. Obviously it wasn't my best, best tennis but it was good enough to beat a top-form player," said Sakkari, who faces Leylah Fernandez or Jasmine Paolini next.

Sakkari is in search of a new coach having ended her six-year partnership with Tom Hill. The Greek world number 11 briefly worked with Sergi Bruguera during the off-season and after the Australian Open but needs to find a full-time coach given Bruguera's commitment to ATP player Arthur Fils. She is confident she will have found a new coach by the time Indian Wells commences next month.

Speaking of her split with Hill, Sakkari said: "It was very tough. I just felt like we couldn't really help each other, we couldn't move forward but we remain very, very good friends, that's never going to change." In Dubai, Sakkari is joined by her mother Angeliki, who is a former top-50 WTA player, and her hitting partner Julien Cagnina.

"She's my emergency coach, that's what I call her," said Sakkari of her mother. "It's nice to have her, we've been going out for dinners every day, it's been a very relaxing week with them."

Noor Ahmad banned from ILT20 for 12 months

SHARJAH (Agencies): Noor Ahmad, the Afghanistan spinner, has been banned by the UAE's ILT20 for 12 months, for breaching his player agreement with Sharjah Warriors.

Noor, who was signed by Warriors for the first season of the ILT20 in 2023, was offered another year's extension by the franchise, but he refused to sign the retention notice, choosing instead to play at the SA20 with Durban Super Giants.

A statement from the ILT20 said that Noor, 19, had been sent a retention notice on the "same terms and conditions in accordance with the Player Agreement terms" ahead of the second season, and following his refusal to sign, Warriors approached the league directly to intervene in the dispute.

The league's disciplinary committee, comprising ILT20 chief executive David White, head of security and anti-corruption Col Azam, and Zayed Abbas, member of the Emirates Cricket Board, investigated the matter and heard the points of view of both Noor and Warriors before communicating their verdict.

The committee had initially recommended a 20-month ban for Noor, but took into consideration the fact that he was a minor while signing the original agreement. The committee eventually decided to pardon eight months from his ban after Noor also explained to them that his agent had not informed him of the full terms of his contract. Noor played seven matches for Warriors in the first season, picking up four wickets for 148 runs, at an average of 37 and economy of 7.04. Noor is the second Warriors player in recent months to be handed a ban.

Last December, Naveen-ul-Haq was also banned by the league for 20 months for not signing the retention notice, effectively ruling him out of the ILT20 in both 2024 as well as 2025.

Andreas Brehme: Germany World Cup winner dies aged 63

BERLIN (Agencies): Former Germany defender Andreas Brehme, who scored the winning goal in the 1990 World Cup final, has died aged 63. Brehme converted a late penalty in the final of the 1990 tournament to secure victory against Argentina in Rome.

He earned 86 caps, including eight goals, for his country and won league titles while at Kaiserslautern, Bayern Munich and Inter Milan. Brehme's partner Susanne Schaefer told German news agency DPA that he "died suddenly" from cardiac arrest.

A versatile left-back, Brehme was at Bayern from 1986-88 and won the Bundesliga title with them in 1987.

"FC Bayern is deeply shocked by the sudden death of Andreas Brehme," said the German club. "We will always keep Andreas Brehme in our hearts - as a world champion and even more so as a very special person. "He will always be part of the FC Bayern family. Rest in peace, dear Andi."

Brehme played for Kaiserslautern from 1981-86 and 1993-98. He won the Bundesliga title in 1998 and German Cup in 1996 during his time at the club, with whom he also had a spell as manager from 2000-02.

"The FCK mourns the loss of Andreas Brehme," said a Kaiserslautern statement. "He wore the Red Devils jersey for a total of 10



years and became German champion and cup winner with FCK.

"In 1990, he shot the German national team to the World Cup title with his penalty and finally became a football legend." Brehme helped Inter Milan win the Serie A title in 1989 and the Italian club said their players would wear black armbands players when they host Atletico Madrid on Tuesday in the first leg of a last-16 Champions League tie.

"A magnificent player, a true Interista," said Inter. "Ciao Andi, forever a legend."

Brehme was 'a great team player' Germany were managed by Franz Beckenbauer, who died aged 78 in January, at the 1990 World Cup. Brehme also scored when his country beat England on penalties in the tournament's semi-finals.

"Andreas Brehme is one of the

greatest and best football players in German history. German football has a lot to thank him for," said German Football Association president Bernd Neuendorf. Former Germany forwards Rudi Voller and Karl-Heinz Rummenigge also paid tribute to their ex-team-mate.

"Andi was our World Cup hero, but for me even more - he was my close friend and companion," said Voller. Rummenigge added: "We played together at the 1986 World Cup in Mexico and Andi was a great team player, who was extremely loyal and reliable. "His love of life was infectious. The fact he's already gone at the age of 63 makes me very sad."

Former Germany captain Philipp Lahm won the World Cup with his country in 2014 and the full-back made more than 500 appearances for Bayern Munich in an illustrious career. He said Brehme was part of his earliest memories of football, having watched him score his famous penalty against Argentina aged six.

"Brehme became one of my idols at the World Cup in Italy," he said in a social media post. "The concentrated, determined look in his eyes, when he started the decisive penalty kick against Argentina in the final... Then he hit, it couldn't be more accurate."



In brief

36,293 tested for Hepatitis

RAWALPINDI (APP): As many as 36,293 persons had been screened for Hepatitis B and C so far during the second phase of the Local Hepatitis Elimination and Prevention (LHEAP) drive started on July 10, 2023. Chief Executive Officer LHEAP Dr Ansar Ishaq told media that the prevalence of hepatitis in the nine union councils of Rawalpindi was recorded as 2.79 per cent through rapid test while the highest rate of occurrence was recorded in the area of Fauji Colony at 9.95 per cent. He said that initially the project was launched in four union councils of the Rawalpindi city which was later extended to nine union councils of the district including UCs 6, 8, 10, 11, 14, 15, 32, 33 and 116. Around 1012 had been diagnosed positive for hepatitis including 186 positives for hepatitis B virus, 811 for hepatitis C and 15 positives for both HCV and HBV, he said and added that LHEAP's teams had visited a total of 8,439 houses in the nine union councils and administered 20,276 doses of vaccine against hepatitis B. He said that the under the LHEAP project free of cost testing and treatment facility was being provided to the patients in the selected UCs.

11 kite sellers arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): In a drive launched against the violators of laws, the district police arrested eleven kite sellers and recovered 1350 kites and strings from their possession on Tuesday. According to police spokesman, Rata Amral police recovered 600 kites from the accused Ahmed, 500 kites from Numan, 40 kites from Moezz, and 30 kites from Anush. In another operation, Taxila police recovered 80 kites from Faizan, while Pirwadhai police recovered 40 kites and 02 strings from Saleh. Similarly, Bani police recovered 20 kites from Abdul Sami, 15 kites and 02 strings from accused Abrar. While continuing the operation, Race Course police recovered 10 kites and 02 strings from Mudassar, 07 kites from Waqas. Police have registered separate cases and started further investigation. Meanwhile, City Police Officer (CPO) Khalid Mehmood Hamdani while appreciating the performance of police teams said that kite flying is a dangerous sport in residential areas and public places that poses a serious threat to human lives. He warned that strict action would be taken against the kite flyers and kite sellers.

Man arrested for torturing mother

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested a son for torturing his old mother and expelling her out of the house in the jurisdiction of Rata Amral Police Station, the police spokesman said here on Tuesday. The victim woman filed an application stating that his son Kamran tortured her brutally and occupied the house forcibly. At the request of the applicant, the police registered a case under the Parental Protection Ordinance and arrested the accused Kamran. Superintendent of Police (SP) Rawal said that all legal requirements will be fulfilled to punish the accused. He said that violence against old-age parents is an unimaginable and deplorable act.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication, Dr. Umar Saif addressing launching ceremony of parental guide titled "Safeguarding Your Child in the Digital Age" at Telenor Headquarters.

Jawad inaugurates AJK's first ever protectorate of emigrants offices

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, Jawad Sohrab Malik on Tuesday inaugurated Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK)'s first ever Protectorate of Emigrants Offices in Bagh and Rawalakot.

The initiative marks a significant milestone in the government's efforts to facilitate the citizens of AJK reflecting the Ministry of OP&HRD's commitment to decent public service

delivery, said a news release issued here.

During the opening ceremony, the SAPM addressed the general public, sharing his reflections on the lack of such essential services in the region until now. He said the residents of Bagh and Rawalakot, in particular, faced hardships, having to travel long hours and spend considerable sums to access these services in Rawalpindi. He further said it was a historic day as we opened two protectorate offices one in Bagh and another in Rawalakot sig-

nificantly benefiting the people of Kashmir.

The newly inaugurated offices in Bagh and Rawalakot will serve as beacons of support for legal labor migration, streamlining processes and providing essential services close to home. This initiative is poised to reduce the financial and logistical burdens previously borne by the region's inhabitants, facilitating easier access to pre-departure orientation, employment opportunities abroad, and community outreach programs.

AIOU to establish training and development center

ISLAMABAD (APP): A "Training and Development Center" is being set up at Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) for the professional development of academic, administrative and servicing department employees. The Vice Chancellor of AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, has taken this initiative, a press release on Tuesday said.

As a pilot project, an 8-week training workshop was started yesterday to train hostel staff, sanitation workers, gardeners, and naib qasids.

Dean, Faculty of Education, Prof. Dr. Fazal ur Rahman said that the professional development of staff is crucial at present. He emphasized that the establishment of this training and development centre would mark a new beginning for the university.

Director, Adult Literacy Center, Dr. Muhammad Ajmal Chaudhry explained the specifics of the training workshop. In the first phase, the hostel staff will

be trained about the basics of hospitality, in the second phase, the sanitary workers and gardeners will be exposed to the best and modern methods of cleaning and beautifying the campus, while in the last phase, naib qasids, security guards and other employees will be trained about public dealing.

Manager, Islamabad Club, Abid Agha, Dr. Muhammad Ajmal Chaudhry, Dr. Zaher, Dr. Rahmatullah Bhatti and Dr. Tahira Bibi will be the trainers. Hostel in-charge, Muzaffar Abbas, thanked the Vice Chancellor, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood and the Adult Literacy Department for providing training to the hostel staff.

Addressing the opening session, Dr. Muhammad Ajmal Chaudhry and President, Employees Welfare Association (EWA), Yasir Mehmood, thanked the Vice Chancellor and described the professional development of the staff as a good

initiative.

Meanwhile, Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has extended the deadline for admissions in matriculation and FA programs for the first phase of Semester Spring 2024. The students can now apply with late fee charges until March 5, said a press release on Tuesday.

However, continue students can enroll themselves without any late fee charges until February 27.

The decision to extend the deadline was taken by the Vice Chancellor, AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, considering the thousands of applications received from students across the country. The admission date is extended to accommodate the maximum number of students.

Admission forms and prospectuses of both programs are available at Main campus, Regional Offices, swift centers and prospectus sale points. Students can also apply online as per their convenience.

Senate standing committee meeting on HR held

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senate Standing Committee for Human Rights was held here on Tuesday in which reports of the country's citizens serving time behind bars on various reasons were highlighted.

According to details, a meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights was presided over by Senator Waleed Iqbal in which, the officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs revealed the total number of Pakistani citizens

serving time behind bars at different prisons around the world.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed the Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights about the status of the citizens who are imprisoned across the world. Around 706 Pakistanis are behind the bars in India, while 44 in the United States, and 330 in the United Kingdom, the ministry of foreign affairs told Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights here.

PM's seat is heating up, and whoever sits will burn: Adil

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Haleem Adil Sheikh, the president of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) in Sindh, and a former leader of the opposition in the Sindh Assembly, appeared before the antiterrorism court.

The case hearing was postponed by the court until March 9. Speaking to the media, Sheikh said, "I have appeared in court today, six months later, in my car from outside." I was transported in a special jail van to Central Jail where I spent six months as a state guest. He stated that today's case dates back to May 25,

2022, and that I was neither nominated or identified in the charge sheet. I wasn't in the city that day. After my prior bail grant, I was arrested in this case, imprisoned for many days, and then given bail.

Haleem stated that I am grateful to the people of Karachi and Hyderabad, as well as everyone of Pakistan. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf has received a mandate from the inhabitants of Karachi and Hyderabad. He stated that we secured 20 NA seats in Karachi and 2 NA seats in Hyderabad, as well as 38 Provincial

Assembly seats under Form 45. He said my constituency is NA-238, and I received 84,000 votes. He stated that we have Form-45s for all 292 polling stations ready at my office. He thanked Jamaat-e-Islami for their important political contribution. He stated that the PTI receives the most votes in Karachi, with Jamaat-e-Islami coming in second. The people have chosen us as their representatives.

All of these seats are officially ours. He said that starting today, we will begin thanking the public in all Karachi constituencies.

World Day of Social Justice observed

ISLAMABAD (APP): Like other parts of the world, Pakistan celebrated the "World Day of Social Justice" here on Tuesday aiming to bring equality and to create the best employment opportunities.

The theme of this year is "Bridging Gaps, Building Alliances." Whereas, on the World Day of Social Justice, India has deprived people of its Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir and minorities in the country especially Muslims of social justice and basic rights.

In a statement in Srinagar, spokesman of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference said Kashmiris have been struggling for their rights for the past seven decades but India has been keeping them deprived of their UN-mandated rights under international law.

Meanwhile, Muslim, Christian, Dalit, and Sikh communities have expressed profound fear and insecurity stemming from systemic oppression and discriminatory policies of India. The theme of the International Day in 2023 focused on the urgency of combatting racism and racial discrimination, 75 years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

The UDHR stated that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms, without distinction of any kind, such as race and color, among others. However, racism and racial discrimination continue to affect people all over the world.

Court awards 14-year sentence

RAWALPINDI (APP): A District and Sessions Court on Tuesday awarded a 14 years' imprisonment to an accused in a murder case.

According to a Police spokesman, the accused Muhammad Younas had killed the victim Jahanzeb with firing over a land dispute. After recording witnesses from both sides, the court also imposed a fine of Rs 500,000 on the convict.

A case was registered against the convict at the Gujjar Khan Police Station in 2021.

Senate body directs to include all educational disciplines in benevolent fund

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senate Standing Committee on Cabinet Secretariat on Tuesday directed the authorities to include all educational disciplines in benevolent fund so that the maximum children of government employees could get benefit from it.

While chairing the meeting, Senator Sadia Abbasi said that nursing courses were very important worldwide and in other countries a nurse is managing an entire hospital. Nursing should also be included in benevolent fund as well.

Senator Engr. Rukhsana Zubair recommended inclusion of skill education sector in the fund as well. The committee directed the authorities concerned to include all educational disciplines in the benevolent fund. Special Secretary Establishment Division apprised the committee regarding the payment of semester fees from Benevolent fund university level. The child of a government employee is reimbursed from the fund.

The Committee was informed that students of Medical, Engineering, Information Technology (IT), Architect, and Business Studies are

reimbursed. Senator Fauzia Arshad said that there are some children of government employees who cannot get admission in government educational institutions due to low marks and get admission in private educational institutions.

Senate body approves Int'l Institute for Technology, Culture, Health Sciences Bill 2024: Senate Standing Committee on Federal Education and Professional Training on Tuesday granted approval to the International Institute for Technology, Culture, and Health Sciences Bill 2024. The committee meeting held at Parliament House, was chaired by Senator Irfan Siddiqui.

The session began with the deliberation of the private member's bill titled "The Higher Education Commission (Amendment) Bill, 2024," presented by Senator Shahadat Awan during the Senate session on 1st January 2024.

This bill, referred to the committee for consideration and report, seeks to establish parliamentary oversight on the functioning of the HEC through the submission of an annual report to both houses. The

Committee unanimously approved the Bill.

Additionally, the Committee gave its approval to the "The International Institute of Technology, Culture, and Health Sciences Bill 2024," introduced by Senator Fawzia Arshad in the Senate session on 19th February 2024.

As this was the final meeting of the standing committee before dissolution, the Chairman Committee, Senator Irfan Siddiqui expressed gratitude to committee members, the Secretary Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, and the Chairman HEC for their unwavering support over the past three years.

The committee members, along with officials from the Ministry and HEC, also commended Senator Irfan Siddiqui's leadership for ensuring the seamless functioning of the committee proceedings.

The committee meeting witnessed the presence of Senators Fawzia Arshad, Falak Naz, Engr Rukhsana Zuberi, Shahadat Awan, the Chairman of HEC, and senior officials from the Federal Education Ministry.

NUML organizes national conference on Mother-Tongue

ISLAMABAD (APP): One day National Conference on "Multilingual and Cultural Implications of Mother-Tongue in context of Globalization" was organized by the Department of Urdu Language & Literature of the National University of Modern Languages (NUML) here on Tuesday. Rector NUML Major General Shahid Mahmood Kayani (Retd) presided over the session while Dean faculty of Social Sciences & Humanities AIOU Professor Dr. Abdul Aziz Sahr was the chief guest and Dr. Arshid Mahmood Nashaad Associate Professor AIOU was the keynote speaker of the inaugural session.

Deans, Directors, Heads of Departments, guests, faculty members and a large number of students also attended the session. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Abdul Aziz said that the ruling elite decides the language of the region. Today, in the era of globalization, the international establishment wants us to think that our languages are being vanished.

He was of the view that language cannot be eliminated if it is deeply rooted and linked with the culture & civilization of that region. Dr Sahr further said that the power corridor decides the language of the people and he quoted the example of the Persian language before the east India Company. Dr. Arshid Mahmood in his address said that there are 70 languages, being spoken in this country, adding it seems that global world has started a campaign to eliminate our beautiful languages. Every language faces the process of evolution hence, we should promote our all-regional languages and Urdu as well.

In the concluding remarks, Rector NUML Major General Shahid Kayani said that language is the reflection of the society, and we must give importance to all our languages. He hoped that this conference would pave the way forward to further promote Urdu and other regional languages. Later, he distributed shields among the guests.

Light rain-thunderstorm, snowfall likely at GB, northeast Punjab, Kashmir

ISLAMABAD (APP): Light rain-thunderstorm with light snowfall over hills is expected at isolated places in Gilgit-Baltistan, northeast Punjab, Kashmir, and adjoining hilly areas during the next 24 hours,

according to the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD). Mainly cold and dry weather is expected in most parts of the country while very cold and cloudy weather will prevail in the upper parts.

According to the synoptic situation, a westerly wave was affecting the upper parts of the country and may persist in Kashmir

and adjoining areas for the next 24 hours.

During the last 24 hours, rain-wind/thunderstorms with snowfall over hills occurred in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Kashmir, Islamabad, Pothohar region, northeast Punjab and Gilgit-Baltistan.

Cold and dry weather prevailed over other parts of the country. The rainfall recorded during the period was

Kashmir: Muzaffarabad (City 47mm, Airport 31), Kotli 23, Rawalakot 11, Garhi Dupatta 07, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Balakot 20, Kakul 11, Kalam 03,

Mardan 01, Gilgit Baltistan: Chilas 16, Skardu 12, Astore, Bagrote, Bunji 06, Gilgit 05, Gupis 01, Punjab: Sialkot (City 13, A/p 04), Mangla 08, Murree 03, Rawalpindi (Shamsabad) 02, Islamabad (City, Golra, Bokra 01), Narowal 01mm.

The snowfall recorded was Malam Jabba 02 inches, Kalam, Mirkhani 1.5, Bagrote, Chitral 01 and Murree 0.5 inches.

The lowest minimum temperatures recorded were Leh -09 C, Kalam -08, Astore, Gupis, Malam Jabba -05, Skardu and Bagrote -03 C.



ISLAMABAD: A vendor displaying colorful plant pots to attract customers at roadside in the Federal Capital.

Ministry signs MoUs

KABUL (Ariana News): The Ministry of Commerce and Industry signed memorandums of understanding (MoUs) to the value of \$3.5 million with 22 institutions. The MoUs are aimed at developing and promoting small and medium enterprises, the ministry said. The Ministry added that the projects are set to be implemented in various sectors across 14 different provinces, through which employment opportunities will be provided to 6,045 people.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Shabaan 10, 1445 — Wednesday, February 21, 2024

50% drop in electricity

KABUL (Khaama Press): Power Supply Company has announced a 50% reduction in electricity imports from Uzbekistan to Afghanistan due to technical issues. The reason for the reduction in electricity imports was technical problems. In addition to substations in Kabul, Khulm, and Khanjan, power imports to Parwan, Kapisa, Panjshir, Samangan, Nangarhar, Laghman, Ghazni, Maidan Wardak, Logar, Paktia, and Khost have increased.

Norway to hold meeting on climate change soon

KABUL (Ariana News): The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan quoted Terje Magnussønn Watterdal, head of Norwegian Committee for Afghanistan (NAC), as saying that Norway will hold a meeting on the consequences of climate change in Afghanistan.

He stated this in a meeting with Zainul Abedin Abed, the deputy head of the Environment Department of the Islamic Emirate. This meeting will be held in April in Kabul and Norway.

In this meeting, head of NAC said that they will hold a meeting with the National Environment Agency and international organizations in Kabul focusing on climate change in Afghanistan.

Also in this meeting, Zainul Abedin Abed talked about the negative conse-



quences of climate change in the fields of agriculture, irrigation, health and some other sectors.

Last year, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Aid (OCHA) said

that Afghanistan is among ten vulnerable countries exposed to climate change and natural disasters.

This organization had warned about the aggravation of drought in Afghanistan and consid-

ered it a threat to people's livelihood and hunger.

According to United Nations estimates, Afghanistan is considered the fourth country at risk and the eighth country vulnerable to climate change.

Efforts underway to standardize airports

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation said that they are working to standardize Afghanistan's airports on the international level.

Officials at the ministry said that 27 airports are currently operating in the country, and five of them are international.

They said that they rebuilt some airports including Kabul International Airport after the takeover of the Islamic Emirate.

"After the withdrawal of US and NATO, Afghanistan's airports were crippled, all airports were damaged, their equipment was inoperative. We were able to equip the airports," said Imamudin Ahmadi, spokesperson for the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation.

Meanwhile, former officials of the ministry said that for international flights by international airlines, the airports should be in line with global standards.

"Infrastructure is very important particularly in airports. Having standard international airports especially in big provinces is a need," said Imamudin Warimach, former deputy minister of Transport and Civil Aviation.

Officials of Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Investment (ACCI) said that the problems of getting regional and other countries' visas should be resolved to increase international flights.

"India is not giving us visas. China, Russia, UAE and some Central Asian countries also do not give us visas. There are also traders who need to travel abroad," said Khan Jan Alokozay, a member of the board of ACCI.

Earlier, Fly Dubai and Air Arabia restarted their flights to Afghanistan.

Trans-Afghan railway project:

ARA sign MoU for feasibility studies

KABUL (Ariana News): The Afghanistan Railway Authority (ARA) announced on Tuesday a memorandum of understanding (MoU) had been signed for feasibility studies on the Trans-Afghan railway project.

ARA said that the head of the organization, Bakht Rahman Sharafat, signed the MoU during his visit to Uzbekistan on Monday. The MoU was signed between Uzbek and UAE officials and Afghanistan.

ARA said once the feasibility study has been completed, results will be sha-

red with various stakeholders including financial institutions, countries and businessmen from Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and Pakistan.

Officials attending Monday's meeting also decided a virtual meeting would be held on Wednesday with Qatari and Pakistani officials.

The Trans-Afghan railway once completed will connect Central Asia with South Asia.

Starting in Balkh's Mazar-e-Sharif, the 647km line will pass through Samangan, Baghlan,

Bamiyan, Maidan Wardak, Logar and Paktia provinces and on to Pakistan.

This project has been under discussion for many years. After regaining power, the Islamic Emirate approved the initial survey which was successfully completed by the technical teams of Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, and Pakistan Railways.

ARA has meanwhile said it once again invites countries, financial organizations and businessmen to invest in Afghanistan railway projects.

Envoy: Time come for interaction with Kabul



KABUL (TOLONews): Japan's ambassador to Kabul, Takayushi Kormaya, in a meeting with the acting minister of Information and Culture, said that the time for the world's interaction with Afghanistan has been reached and steps must be taken forward in this area, according to the ministry.

According to officials in the MoIC, Takayushi Kormaya also said that Japan wants good relations with Afghanistan.

"In the meeting the ambassador of Japan said that as the time has been

reached, the world must interact with the Islamic Emirate. He also highlighted the achievements of the Islamic Emirate and said that the Islamic Emirate has good achievements in various sectors," said Haqmal Zia, the deputy minister of Information and Culture.

"The Islamic Emirate should also adopt correct and logical policies. Interaction with the world is inevitable and we cannot live on an island and not have any kind of relations with the world," said Salim Paigir, a political analyst.

According to Haqmal

Zia, the deputy minister, the cooperation between Kabul and Tokyo in the field of historical monuments was also emphasized.

"There has been a war in Afghanistan for decades, and historical places and monuments have been damaged, and there is a need to have a big process in this area. Japan ensured their willingness to cooperate in this area," he added.

Japan has maintained good relations with the Islamic Emirate after it came to power, but so far no country has recognized the Islamic Emirate.

Ministry establishes secure gateway for all Internet users in Afghanistan

KABUL (Ariana News): The Ministry of Communications and Information Technology of Afghanistan has established an internal gateway or Internet Exchange Point Center (NIXA) for the purpose of security of Internet traffic and confidentiality of citizens' information, whereby all Internet user information in Afghanistan is protected.

The ministry's spokesman said in a post on X that in the past, this was done by the Internet supplier countries, but there

were many disadvantages.

"Internet data and information were not safe because the traffic was carried out through them so that these countries could have easy access to information and information of Internet users," said the ministry's spokesman Anayatullah Alokozay.

"Internet traffic used to be very expensive in foreign countries, but now the said traffic is done cheaply and safely inside the country, and finally due to the length of the

route from foreign countries, the quality of services is low and sometimes information and data are lost," added Alokozay.

Alokozay said that the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology values the security of information and information of Internet users within the country and considers it its responsibility and duty to create a safe, secure and valuable environment.

The Internet Exchange Point Center of Afghanistan (NIXA) is the

physical infrastructure through which the Internet traffic of Internet Service Providers (ISPs) is exchanged.

The Internet Exchange Point Center (NIXA) was established to build an internal gateway for Afghanistan's internal Internet traffic, privacy of information, improving the quality of the Internet and reducing bandwidth consumption.

By the establishment of the center, customer's information will be safe and secure, internal traffic speed will increase, and the leak of information abroad will be prevented.

UN Chief urges end to ban on girls's education

KABUL (Khaama Press): António Guterres, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, says that the outrageous ban on girls' access to education and employment in Afghanistan must be lifted.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations on Tuesday said on its social media platform X that, "In Afghanistan, the outrageous ban on girls' access to education & the ban on women's employment must be reversed."

He also emphasized that women and girls in Afghanistan should have meaningful participation in all aspects of life.

"Women & girls must be able to fully & meaningfully participate in all aspects of Afghan life – from seats in classrooms to the tables where decisions are made," Guterres said.

António Guterres wrote that the world must ensure that the needs and rights of all Afghan citizens are a top priority for the current authorities in the country.

He pointed out the dire economic situation in Afghanistan, emphasizing that the UN's humanitarian response plan has received less than three percent of the required budget.

António Guterres also discussed the situation in Afghanistan with special representatives of countries during a two-day United Nations meeting in Qatar. The UN Secretary-General stated that the absence of the Taliban from the Doha meeting has not harmed it and that the sessions of this organization have been very useful.

Following the Taliban's resurgence in August 2021, they imposed many restrictions against women including closing girls' schools beyond sixth grade and preventing girls from going to university and working in domestic and international aid organizations.

Due to the Taliban's strict restrictions, women were also deprived of free travel, going to parks and restaurants, and participating in sports.

Over the past two years, the Taliban have arbitrarily detained and imprisoned many active and protesting women, as well as countless others, under the pretext of a bad Hijab.

Returnees seek education facilities for children



GHAZNI CITY (Pajhwok): Returnees from Pakistan in southern Ghazni province have asked the government to provide their children with education facilities.

Some of them complain their children were deprived of education in Pakistan because of poverty. They continue to face the same problem even in their homeland.

Sher Gul, head of the returnees' community in Ghazni, told Pajhwok Afghan News they had repatriated to the country three months ago.

Besides lack of food and shelter, they were also worried about the education of their children, he said.

Gul recalled: "I am disabled and cannot work. My

children could go not to school in Pakistan and they are still faced with an uncertain destiny?"

Sher Gul's spouse Nazo told Pajhwok she had been grappling with mental problems because of concerns about children's education.

Mohammad Jamil, another returnee, also urged the government to provide their children the opportunity to study in public and private schools.

He said: "I have eight children, all deprived of education since repatriation from Pakistan. I want them to study."

Haseeb, 12, is also a returnee, who hopes to go to school like other children. "I was going to school in Pakistan ... I

hoped to complete my education but suddenly I left behind everything."

Several other repatriates, holding similar remarks, asked the authorities to provide their children education facilities.

Director of Refugees Maulvi Mohammad Omar Adil, meanwhile, said a commission had been formed to look into returnees' problems.

Adil said the government was ready to solve the problems of returnees and would provide their children education facilities in line with its policy.

The government of Pakistan has deported more than half a million Afghan refugees to their homeland since November 1 2023.

IAEA chief says Iran's nuclear enrichment activity remains high

KABUL (Ariana News): Iran continues to enrich uranium well beyond the needs for commercial nuclear use despite UN pressure to stop it, IAEA chief Rafael Grossi said, adding he wanted to visit Tehran next month for the first time in a year to end the "drifting apart".

Speaking to Reuters after he briefed EU foreign ministers on the subject, the head of the UN's nuclear watchdog said that while the pace of uranium enrichment had slowed slightly since the end of last year, Iran was still enriching at an elevated rate of around 7 kg of uranium per month to 60% purity, Reuters reported. Enrichment to 60%

brings uranium close to weapons grade, and is not necessary for commercial use in nuclear power production.

Iran denies seeking nuclear weapons but no other state has enriched to that level without producing them.

Under a defunct 2015 agreement with world powers, Iran can enrich uranium only to 3.67%. After then-President Donald Trump pulled the US out of that deal in 2018 and reimposed sanctions, Iran breached and moved well beyond the deal's nuclear restrictions.

Between June and November last year, Iran slowed down the enrichment to 3 kg per month, but

jumped back up to a rate of 9 kg at the end of the year, the watchdog, known as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), previously reported.

The increase came soon after Tehran barred a third of the IAEA's core inspections team, including the most experienced, from taking part in agreed monitoring of the enrichment process, read the report.

"This slowdown, speedup thing is like a cycle that for me does not alter the fundamental trend, which is a trend of constant increase in inventory of highly enriched uranium," said Grossi.

A spokesperson for Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation was not

immediately available for comment.

The IAEA warned at the end of 2023 that Tehran already had enough material to make three nuclear bombs if it enriches the material now at 60% to beyond 60%.

"There is a concerning rhetoric, you may have heard high officials in Iran saying they have all the elements for a nuclear weapon lately," Grossi said.

He said the concern was all the higher because of what he termed current circumstances in the Middle East, a reference to tensions over Israel's war with Iran-backed Hamas in Gaza.

"We seem to be drifting apart... Iran says they are not getting incentives from

the West, but I find this logic very complicated to understand because they should work with us... It should never be contingent on economic or other incentives."

Before visiting Tehran, Grossi is to fly to Moscow to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin to discuss Iran and the Middle East, along with Ukraine.

Russia is a signatory of the 2015 deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), alongside the US, China, France, Britain and Germany. The deal lifted sanctions on Iran in exchange for curbs on its nuclear activities.

"Russia has a role to play on Iran. It has played a role in the past as a JCPOA

country and in the current circumstances where JCPOA is all but disintegrated, something must fill the void," he said.

Grossi said he saw a decrease in military operations around the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant in Ukraine, the biggest nuclear power plant in Europe, Reuters reported.

Fears of a serious nuclear incident were high when Russian forces took over the facility in 2022 and again following the destruction of the Kakhovka Dam last year.

"There hasn't been a militarization, any deployment of heavy artillery," he said, adding that nearby combat zones and recurring

blackouts remained a worry.

"The minimum staff required to look after the plant in the current situation is there," he said.

Grossi said the minimum staffing was still met despite about 100 members refusing to sign a new contract with Russia's Rosatom that took over operations of the idled plant in 2022.

The EU has so far held back on sanctioning Russia's state-owned nuclear firm Rosatom or any of its subsidiaries despite numerous calls to target that industry. Europe still relies heavily on Rosatom which supplies nearly 50% of the world's enriched uranium.

"Many companies in the

West depend on Russian supplies – enriched uranium or fuel... The consensus is sanctioning Rosatom would not be realistic and it's impractical. It would put the nuclear industry at a standstill in many countries," Grossi said.

Reducing dependence on Russia's nuclear sector would cost Europe billions, Grossi said, and he saw no immediate shift away. He added that the larger issue was infrastructure and incentives, and projections of rising uranium demand globally.

"Frankly, I see an increased presence of Russian uranium enrichment capabilities in the world rather than a decrease," he said.



RAWALPINDI: President Dr. Arif Alvi addressing the National Health Summit on dental hygiene organized by Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

President for preventive care to address health-related challenges

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: President Dr Arif Alvi on Tuesday stressed the need for adopting preventive care to address health-related challenges, especially oral diseases, in Pakistan, adding that over 90 per cent of dental issues could be prevented by adopting healthy habits.

The president said that a resource-constrained country like Pakistan could not afford to provide curative care to such a large population, however, creating awareness could help reduce the disease burden on the country's health sector. The president expressed these views while addressing the National Health Summit organized by the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI).

Speaking on the occasion, the president highlighted the importance of physical hygiene, he said that from the Islamic teachings, it stood proved that personal hygiene was linked with spiritual purity. He said that poor dental health could lead to other problems, affecting the overall well-being of individuals.

He said about 90 per cent dental cases could be cured if prevention habits were developed by the people including regular brushing of teeth, similar was the case with communicable diseases. The president urged all the stakeholders and the business community to play their role in creating awareness among the masses about health-related issues including dental health, mental stress and population growth.

The president said that the entire nation had set a precedent in the world with their collective efforts

during the Covid-19 pandemic and stressed that such a display of unity was critical to address disconcerting issues in education, health and economic sectors. He highlighted that during the Covid-19 pandemic, when the deadly wave was hitting the globe, Pakistan emerged as the third best-performing country in the world to avert the damages in health and economic sectors.

He said it was all possible due to the collective efforts and cooperation of the people and all stakeholders who displayed unison in their efforts to ward off the spread of the pandemic. "That precedent has carved a path for the future which can guide us in our endeavours to overcome the contemporary challenges," he opined. The serious issue of over 26 million out-of-school children required joint efforts and mosques could be utilized to impart education to these children, he added.

The president mentioned Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka where the literacy rate among the children was higher than Pakistan. He also cited the precedent of China that lifted millions of its people out of poverty by focusing on health and education sectors. "The State can show the path but it is the responsibility of all stakeholders of the society to share the responsibility by addressing issues in the education and health sectors," he added.

President Alvi further stressed upon focusing on priorities and continuity of policies which required public involvement. About 24 percent of the population in the country was suffering from the mental stress due to various reasons which should be addressed comprehensively, he said,

adding that awareness about the child and drug abuse should be created through different mediums. The president also called for morality-based principles in the world which was overwhelmed by the vested interests and reiterated the removal of disparity in distribution of wealth and accumulation of resources in fewer hands.

Earlier, speaking on the occasion, RCCI President Saqib Rafique said President Dr Arif Alvi was the first head of state who visited the chamber's building and encouraged the business community for their involvement in different initiatives taken for the health of the general public. He said almost 90 per cent of people could not afford the expensive treatment of dentistry, adding the dental related diseases could be avoided with just due care and prevention.

He said the chamber was making all possible measures to extend better health facilities in every nook and cranny of the Rawalpindi division, under which it had arranged mobile dental units for diagnosing chronic disease caused by bad oral hygiene. Besides, it was carrying out water testing and data collection in 74 union councils of the Rawalpindi division, he added.

Chairman RCCI Standing Committee on Health Dr Shimali Daud Arain stressed the need for creating awareness among the masses about oral health as around 90 per cent of Pakistanis were suffering from dental-related diseases. RCCI Group leader Sohail Altaf said, "a strong economy guarantees the strong national defence that comes from political stability and consistency in policies."

Provision of reserve seats: PHC adjourns hearing

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice SM Attique Shah adjourned hearing on Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) plea for provision of reserve seats due to unavailability of the lawyer, on Tuesday.

During hearing the lawyer Shah Faisal advocate informed that on Monday PTI backed newly elected independent law-makers had join a political party. He claimed that PTI didn't provided any directions to him after the new development.

The counsel informed that senior lawyer Qazi Anwar is in Islamabad and requested to fix the plea for hearing tomorrow (on Wednesday). However, Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim observed that it isn't possible because other cases are fixed for hearing for tomorrow (today/ Wednesday).

The plea is fixed for hearing on request of PTI, Justice SM Attique Shah remarked. He further observed that PTI may file early hearing plea to Additional Registrar if necessary. PHC's divisional bench comprised of Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice SM Attique Shah adjourned hearing due to unavailability of senior lawyer.

29 suspects get bail in attack case

F.P. Report

LAHORE: An Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) on Tuesday approved bail pleas of 29 more suspects including a woman in the Jinnah House attack case.

According to the details, the ATC heard bail pleas of the suspects nominated in the case pertaining to the attack and ransacking of Jinnah House on May 9 after the arrest of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan.

The ATC judge granted bail to 29 accused including Ayesha Ali, Bilal Latif, Muhammad Jahangir, Bilal Arshad, and Ahmed. The ATC also approved bail pleas of Dost Muhammad, Hameedullah, Tayyab Jameel, Muhammad Amjad, Muhammad Rashid, Bilal Idrees, Shahid Mahmood, Muhammad Fayyaz, Nadeem Altaf, Muhammad Imran and others. The ATC judge directed the suspects to submit surety bonds of Rs100,000 each.

According to police, the accused were involved in attacking and ransacking the Jinnah House on May 9. The Violent clashes broke out across Pakistan after former Prime Minister and PTI chief Imran Khan was arrested from the Islamabad High Court (IHC) on May 9. Around 214 accused moved the court, seeking bail in the case and 19 of them have already been awarded bail. The ATC would pronounce a verdict on other pleas on Wednesday.

JI to hold protest on 23rd

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) has declared its intent to initiate a protest campaign commencing from February 23, aimed at addressing purported rigging during the recent general elections.

According to spokesperson Qaiser Sharif, the party vows to employ all constitutional and democratic channels to shed light on election discrepancies. The campaign will kick off in Peshawar on February 23rd, spearheaded by Sirajul Haque.

Sharif disclosed plans for a democracy preservation conference scheduled for February 25th in Islamabad. Key demands include the resignation of the Election Commissioner and the formation of a High Judicial Commission to conduct a comprehensive audit of the election process. The party asserts an unwavering commitment to safeguarding people's rights.

Expressing discontent with the caretaker government and Election Commission, Sharif criticized their perceived failure in fulfilling responsibilities. He lamented the prevalence of institutional interference and accused major political parties of prioritizing personal gain over national interest.

Senators demand probe for fair polls

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The members of the Upper House of the Parliament on Tuesday demanded the forum to hold a probe of the general elections results to ensure free and fair polls and establish respect for public mandate.

The Senators while addressing the adjournment motion moved by Senators Muhammad Tahir Bizinjo, Sardar Muhammad Shafiq Tareen, Mushtaq Ahmed, Syed Ali Zafar and others regarding the situation arising out of the results of General Elections-2024 as a matter of national importance.

Senator Saif Ullah Abro of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) demanded that there were 858 total seats of national and provincial assemblies that had almost 160,000 From-45 (essential document to tabulate a provincial or general assembly constituency poll result) that should be verified through audit to establish the credibility of the General Elections-2024 as free and fair polls. "The victor of the polls after the probe should be announced at the floor of the Senate and the PTI will accept that party's mandate who soever and I make this commitment on behalf of my party," he said.

Senator Taj Haider of Pakistan People's Party Parliamentary (PPPP) said the country was at the crossroads of history with two clear pathways one leading to violence and chaos and the other to unity and wisdom whereas the latter is propitious. He urged that it was high time for all the political parties to give up emotionalism and opt for rationalism in their political struggles.

Senator Haider added that the PPPP had submitted over 60 complaints in writing to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and all with proofs including video evidences claiming polling of fake votes. "We request the other political parties to abstain from violence and take legal course of action for redressal of their grievances," he added.

Senator Aon Abbas of PTI wished all the best to the retiring senior senators. He thanked the senators from the treasury benches for supporting PTI on the motion that sought production orders of detained PTI Senator Ejaz Ahmed Chaudhry. Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, independent, said the Elections held on February 8th were historic yet contentious as it had transformed the political scenario and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), PPP and PTI has emerged as the largest political parties of the country and they should now unite for the country.

He proposed a three-point way forward

citing general amnesty for all political prisoners including missing persons of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), inclusion of all into the political process and formulation of a national government to safeguard democracy and the political system to circumvent any crisis-like situation. PML-N Senator Irfan Siddiqui said that there was no doubt about the fact that the history of elections in the country was unpleasant.

Inviting the PTI for dialogue, he emphasized the importance of a constructive approach for the better future of the country. He urged PTI leadership to refrain from engaging in politics of hate. PTI Senator Walid Iqbal said that the shutting down of mobile and internet services during elections had invited criticism from the world.

He said that the caretaker government and the election commission would have to prove that there was no "malice" in this regard. He further asked about the whereabouts of the Form-45, noting that the chief election commissioner had directed to release all results till 2am on election night. Jamaat-e-Islami's Senator Mushtaq Ahmed has said that mobile and internet services were shut down. "At that moment, it was evident that polls were not free, fair or transparent," he said.

He said that X formerly Twitter had been shut down on services. "Why were internet and mobile services shut down on Feb 8 polls? Why is X being restricted for three days?" He said that the shutdown of X was causing educational harm and was an attack on people's digital rights. He called for the restoration of all social media platforms.

In addition, Senators Muhammad Tahir Bizinjo, Ali Zafar, Sardar Muhammad Shafiq Tareen and Mohammad Humayun Mohmand, Hidayatullah Khan, Behramand Khan Tungi, Muhammad Akram, Zeeshan Khanzada, Umer Farooq, Prof Dr Mehr Taj Roghani, Molvi Faiz Muhammad, and Fawzia Arshad have also raised serious questions about the fairness and transparency of the general elections, calling for an investigation to assess their legitimacy.

However, Caretaker Minister for Human Rights, Khalil George was not allowed by the members of the House for winding up the discussion after Senator Sadia Abbasi of PML-N and Senator Saif Ullah Abro opposed his take and challenged his mandate to present his performance before the House. Senator Abbasi pointed out the quorum which resulted into the adjournment of the session till Friday till 10:30 am, whereas the motion was disposed of.

Balochistan reaches deal with Chaman protests

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Caretaker Minister for Information Jan Achakzai on Tuesday announced the solution of the Chaman protests disruption following the release of four detained protesters on the guarantee of local elders.

The area elders pledged that the protesters would not disrupt the normal life of Chaman town. Earlier, the protesters had blocked the Chaman Passport Office, prompting local law enforcement agencies (police and Levies) to remove the barricades.

However, the roadblocks have since been cleared and traffic remains normal. The protests had emerged against the newly implemented one-document requirement for travel, which stipulates that a passport is mandatory. The local administration has reiterated its commitment to enforcing this state-mandated policy and warned against any attempts to create law and order problems, emphasizing that such actions will be met with stern action.

Enraged people blocked Quetta-Chaman highway at Dara-e-Khojak area in protest on Tuesday against the detention of the Laghari Ittehad leaders.

On the call of All Parties, Anjuman-e-Tajirani, and Laghari Ittehad of Chaman region, the angry protesters blocked Quetta Chaman main highway and raised slogans against the authorities. The blockade of highway caused long queues of vehicles moving between Quetta and Chaman. It is pertinent to mention All Parties Chaman, Anjuman-e-Tajirani, and Laghari Ittehad have been observing protest sit-in in Chaman for the last many months against the implementation of "Single Document Regime" for travelling between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Police detained leaders and workers of Laghari Ittehad the previous day when they staged a protest sit-in outside Passport Office Chaman against single document regime. Separately, Caretaker Minister for Information, Jan Achakzai has said that protesters were arrested after they took the law into their hands by blocking passport office in Chaman.

In a statement issued here on Tuesday, he said that permission had been granted to All Parties Chaman, Anjuman-e-Tajirani and Laghari Ittehad to observe peaceful protest sit-in in Chaman, but the government had to intervene after protesters resorted to provocative act by blocking Passport Office in Chaman. He said that implementation of "Single Document Regime" was the decision of the state and it would be implemented at any cost.

Pushtunkhwa National Awami Party (PNAP) on Tuesday rallied and staged a protest demonstration against alleged altering of the result of NA-251-Killa Saifullah-cum-Zhob constituency.

The rally, under the aegis of PNAP, was taken out from the Central Secretariat of PNAP at Jinnah Road. The participants marched through different roads and reached Bacha Khan Chowk where a protest demonstration was held.

Addressing the protest demonstration, the party leaders said that Chairman, PNAP, Khushal Khan Kakar, had won the election from NA-251-Killa Saifullah-cum-Zhob, but District Returning Officer had altered the election result, turning the victory of Khushal Khan Kakar into defeat.

They demanded to declare Chairman PNAP Khushal Khan Kakar as winner from NA-251-Killa Saifullah-cum-Zhob constituency. The protest demonstration was addressed by Senior Deputy Chairman, PNAP, Raza Muhammad Raza, Provincial President, Nasrullah Zarae and others.

Meanwhile, the PTI backed candidate from PB-40-III-Quetta, Dawood Shah Kakar, said on Tuesday that authorities of five police polling stations had been tasked not to allow Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf backed candidates for election campaign in Quetta.

Addressing a press conference at Quetta Press Club with provincial leader of PTI, Sardar Zain-ul-Abidin Khilji and others, he said that the general elections were rigged and cellular services suspended, adding that ballot boxes of 18 polling stations of PB-40-III-Quetta were seized.

Dead body of minor girl recovered



F.P. Report

BUNER: The dead of body minor girl named Saeda aged six years recovered from agricultural fields near her residence in the premises of Gagra police station, on Tuesday.

According to details, the minor girl went missing and disappeared since Sunday while on the third day her dead body has been found the agricultural fields. Police shifted dead body to the nearby RHC Diwana Baba from where it was shifted to DHQ Hospital Dagger due to lack of post mortem facility in the RHC.

The doctors confirmed there were no apparent signs on the body that was why they have taken material from the internal parts of the victim's body and sent it to the laboratory for forensics and the report will be able to assess the nature of the murder.

Meanwhile, police sources have said that the murder case is being investigated by the police as the victim's father is abroad. As per police source the case has been registered in the Gagra police complaint and the investigation team has started the investigation from various angles and claimed that soon the reasons for the murder and the real culprits will be traced and the accused will be arrested and brought to justice and will really punish.

Rains, snowfall kill six, injure 14 in KP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: At-least six people including two younger brothers were killed and 14 others injured in various incidents related to rain and snow in various parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) said on Tuesday that due to rains and snowfall continuing in different parts of the province for the last three days, six people including two younger brothers and another child were killed while 14 others injured.

It said the rains totally destroyed two houses and caused partial damage to 16 other houses. In Malakand Division a man, woman and in Mardan a woman were killed in rain related incidents. It further informed that a man in Swat and a child in Dir Upper were killed in roof collapse incidents due to rain. In Kurram district a child, man and four women were injured.

In Katlang tehsil of

Mardan two little brothers identified as Mashal (5) and Danyal (6) were killed in a water pool created by the rain. The local people and rescue workers retrieved their bodies from the pool.

Meanwhile, rain and snowfall continued for the third consecutive day in Abbottabad and adjacent areas, causing a considerable drop in mercury in tourists' destinations.

In Thandiani area of the district, over three feet snowfall has been recorded during the last three days, blocking all roads leading towards Murree and disconnecting dozens of villages from the city area.

According to local people, prolonged power outages were also reported from the upper parts of the district due to heavy snowfall forcing the people to remain indoors. The snowy weather has also caused a shortage of food items and fire wood in the upper Abbottabad.

The officials of GDA were busy in clearing the roads through heavy machinery while Rescue

1122 staff and district police were present to assist the tourists. The snowfall continued in Nathia Gali, Changa Gali, Donga Gali and Ayubia for the last three days. Due to the heavy snowfall life in these tourists' resorts has almost come to a standstill.

Meanwhile, the district administration of Dir under the supervision of assistant commissioner Samarbagh Muhammad Sohail Khan and assistant commissioner Lal Qila Noor Zali Khan on Tuesday continued to clear the Shahi and Kalpani Maidan roads of snow with the help of heavy machinery. It was a bright sunny day after torrential rains in plains and snowfall on hill-tops for two consecutive days.

The Lower Dir DC Wasil Khan also directed the Pakhtunkhwa Highways Authority (PKHA) to clear the Shahi Samarbagh and Kalpani Maidan road from snow. The roads, according to locals were cleared for vehicular traffic and residents took a sigh of relief.

Hamas chief in Cairo for Gaza truce talks

CAIRO (AFP): Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh arrived in Cairo Tuesday for talks with Egyptian officials, the militant group said, days after mediators said prospects for a new truce with Israel had dimmed. The Qatar-based head of Hamas's political bureau will "hold discussions with Egyptian officials on the political situation and the situation in the field," a statement said.

The delegation will also discuss "efforts to stop the aggression, provide relief to citizens and achieve the goals of our Palestinian people," it added. Despite a flurry of meetings with both

Israeli and Hamas negotiators last week, Egyptian, Qatari and US mediators made no headway in their efforts to pause more than four months of relentless fighting.

"The pattern in the last few days is not really very promising," Qatari Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani said at the Munich Security Conference on Saturday. In a statement on Saturday, Haniyeh renewed Hamas's demands, even though some of them have been dismissed as "delusional" by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The demands include a ceasefire, an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, an end to Israel's blockade of the territory and safe shelter for hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinian civilians. Israel has vowed to destroy Hamas in response to its unprecedented October 7 attack that resulted in the deaths of 1,160 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally of official Israeli figures. Its retaliatory offensive has killed 29,195 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to the Hamas-run territory's health ministry.



NEW DELHI: Indian farmers at the Shambhu Haryana-Punjab border point during a protest for acceptance of their demands.